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School bullying is a topic that has received a great deal of attention over the last several years. School personnel have been inundated with law, policy, and public outcry about this serious issue. Administrators have at times been overwhelmed by the conversation surrounding school bullying. Even though their stories are seldom heard, there are many schools that are experiencing great success in the area of bully prevention. There is a pressing need for administrators to hear those stories and understand how they can make a difference. As such, this qualitative study examined how the principal can positively impact the culture of bullying in a school.

A case study approach of three exemplar schools was used for this study. The principal along with three additional staff leaders from each school were interviewed. Observations at each school were also conducted. The data were used to create a story about each school and the role the principal plays in positively shaping the culture around bullying at that school.

The findings of this study reveal that the principal is influenced in his or her approach to bullying by a variety of factors including prior experiences, preexisting attitudes and perceptions, and legal guidelines. As such, the effective principal purposefully engages existing attitudes and perceptions and assumes the responsibility of influencing those attitudes and perceptions by leading on the issue of bullying. This study

reveals that leading involves both communication and actions. The findings of this study highlight the importance of the principal in establishing positive school culture.

THE PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL BULLYING: AN EXAMINATION OF THE
ADMINISTRATOR'S ABILITY TO POSITIVELY IMPACT THE
CULTURE OF BULLYING IN A SCHOOL

by

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April

April, you have been my source of comfort, motivation, and conscience for fourteen years. You make me strive to be better. The realization of this goal would not be possible without you or your unfailing love. This work belongs to you, as without you there would be no goal worth having.

Jude Kate and Ava

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This work is also dedicated to John and Irene Hill, Ray Vernon, Glenda Raphael, James Miller, and Cathy Vernon. Each of you has a stamp on my life. The words of this work bear your influence. I am who I am because of each you and your influence on my life.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

If I had six hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend the first four sharpening the axe.

— Abraham Lincoln

Current media have inundated us with stories of students subjected to relentless harassment and abuse. Recently, the New York Times published an article about Phoebe Prince, a 15-year-old freshman who hanged herself after relentless bullying by her school peers. She had recently moved to the Massachusetts school from Ireland. After she was repeatedly taunted and physically abused on one particular day at school, her sister found her hanging in the family home shortly after school, still wearing her school clothes. In this particular case, the prosecutor filed felony charges against six of the teenagers involved in the bullying of Phoebe (Eckholm & Zezima, 2010). Another recent report from CNN (Martinez, 2013) recounts the story of Rebecca Sedwick, a 12-year-old Florida girl who jumped to her death from the top of a building. Two other female schoolmates allegedly bullied her. One of the girls even posted remarks on Facebook after her death about bullying the girl to the point of suicide. The two girls were charged with felonies. Charges against both girls have since been dropped. These incidents, along with many others like them, have focused the national conversation on bullying and the responsibility schools have in addressing it.

In a recent letter to the editor of the *Rhinoceros Times Greensboro* (Ali, 2011), a parent praised the local school district's efforts to confront bullying against Muslims in its schools but warned that more needs to be done. He recounted one Iraqi refugee student's struggle to deal with the associations his peers make between him and terrorist organizations like Al Qaida. He cited the district's diversity and pointed out that the actions of a few, such as Osama Bin Laden, no more represent Muslims than the actions against the Federal Building in Oklahoma City represent Christians. His story is echoed throughout diverse local communities nationwide.

Even the White House has stepped into the arena. *USA Today* (Hall, 2011) reported that the White House recently convened a conference to address the issue of preventing bullying. The conference comes on the heels of an incident in which an 11-year-old, Ty Field, committed suicide after being bullied at school. These are just a few of the stories that have turned communities, local school districts, and the nation's attention to the age-old problem of bullying.

Even though there seems to be an increase in stories and incidents of bullying, it is not a new topic for schools. Most of us remember Scut Farkus from the movie "A Christmas Story." He would stand and wait for the smaller kids to pass by and tease and push them until they cried "uncle." This was portrayed as a rite of passage and as something students were expected to endure until they had the size or the courage to stand up to their adversary. The truth was, as many of us remember, that bullying was rarely that simple. Those who are the victims often do not possess the skills or resources

to take action. Schools and the government for some time have recognized this. As a matter of fact, there is a growing cache of policy and law that addresses the issue.

For school administrators, the issue of bullying presents challenges on a moral, legal, and practical level. The literature review in this work will focus in large part on the legal and practical aspects of the administrator's role in addressing bullying. This study will deal more closely with the practical aspect. At issue is the administrator's understanding of bullying and his or her ability to appropriately address it. The principal must understand what bullying actually is and how it manifests itself. The principal must also be able to ensure that staff members are able to recognize and appropriately address bullying. Policy and legislation are also raising not only the level of accountability but also the level of liability for school administrators. To be certain, bullying is an issue that demands our attention.

Rationale and Perspective of the Researcher

I am currently serving as the principal of a K-8 school in a large urban school system in North Carolina. Our school serves a diverse population of students comprising varying levels of socioeconomic status, racial classification, and cultural background. Students at the school are part of a comprehensive anti-bullying program that is woven into the curriculum for all students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The school employs strategies for bullies, victims, and bystanders. As such, I have developed an interest in understanding the impact that I can play as an administrator in creating an environment that discourages bullying.

During my career, I have taught in two different middle schools and served as an assistant principal in another. I have significant exposure to bullying at the middle school level and therefore have strong personal feelings on its severity and extent during these critical school years. It is my opinion that while bullying is certainly not exclusive to middle school, it is a more pervasive issue during these adolescent years. Even in my recollection of childhood years, it was in my junior high years that I remember the most open and relentless bullying. Even though I was not the subject of bullying, as it will be later defined in this work, I witnessed several instances that I remember to this day. I often remember those events when I am addressing issues related to bullying in my school.

I also have the privilege of serving on my school district's harassment, discrimination, and bully-prevention committee. The committee is charged with examining district-wide issues of bullying and reviewing and recommending plans and steps for a comprehensive approach. We make recommendations for the district code of conduct and district reporting procedures.

The Problem

There is no doubt that bullying is a significant problem in our schools (Swearer, Wang, Collins, Strawhun, & Fluke, 2014). It has no boundaries. Bullying finds its way into elementary school, middle school, and high school. It can be found in the inner city school and in the suburban school. It does not respect gender, race, socioeconomics, or creed. It affects us all in some way or another.

In addition, school officials are increasingly being held to a higher standard with how they approach bullying in their schools. It is certainly in the best interest of schools to ensure that the adults are taking bullying seriously, that they are taking steps to proactively eliminate climates that are conducive to bullying, and that they are creating policy to clearly address bullying when it happens. While the currently level of accountability for school officials presents a positive development in the ongoing response to school bullying, it must be met with knowledge, understanding, and strategies to be truly effective.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to understand the role principals play in combating bullying and how their actions can positively impact the culture in their schools. Principals are the front line in schools. They have the responsibility to establish culture and create a sense of safety and security in their schools. Bullying is a unique issue, however. It rarely presents itself in clear or obvious ways. Victims are often afraid to report and teachers are often too busy to notice. Even the witnesses of bullying are unsure of how to react. Through this research, I want to inform and empower principals through the practice of others. I believe that knowledge of the positive impact that one can have is the first step making in a difference.

Through knowledge and information, I also hope to influence practice. It is my desire to see principals develop an understanding of the severity of and consequences of bullying and to establish the confidence necessary to clearly articulate their vision for the culture of their schools. I want them to have the skills and knowledge to address bullying

through their own unique leadership. While programs are an important piece to comprehensive approaches to bullying it is my belief that in the absence of everything else, strong leadership is the determining variable.

Overview of the Study

The research in this study will examine the relationship between the administrator's attitudes and actions towards bullying and the culture of bullying in a school. Every principal and staff member will certainly have an opinion about the nature and severity of bullying in general and about bullying in his or her own school. That perception, or attitude, will drive the urgency and practice in a school. Research that I will cite later in this work will also show that bullying is often tied to culture in a school. The culture is what encourages or discourages behavior of any kind in the school-behavior of students and staff members alike. In my opinion, it is critical that we understand the connection between the two. Principals must have an understanding of their role in impacting culture. As such, this study will examine the following research questions:

1. How do a principal's attitudes and experiences affect how he or she perceives bullying?
2. How do principals of schools that have positive, anti-bullying cultures perceive their role with regard to the culture of bullying at the school site?
3. How do effective principals lead on the issue of bullying?
4. What components do effective principals deem necessary to build a comprehensive approach to school bullying?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is no shortage of literature on the topic of bullying. Topics range from broad definitions and characteristics of bullying to impacts and implications for bullying. For the purposes of this study, I have selected several studies that focus on various aspects of bullying, including administrators' perceptions as they relate to bullying. I have also included articles from professional journals that show trend issues surrounding bullying. This study also deals extensively with culture. Definitions and opinions about culture range widely. As such, I will review literature about culture, in particular as it relates to culture in school.

What is Culture?

As we examine the role the administrator plays in positively affecting the culture of bullying in a school, it is important that we understand what culture is and why it matters. This is not an extensive study of organizational culture, but rather a brief look into the literature in an attempt to provide some context for the role of culture in a school and subsequently how that culture can relate to and affect bullying. Once we are able to have a basic understanding of culture, we can then apply that understanding to culture's relationship to the issue of bullying in a school. Peterson and Deal (1998) define culture as "the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set

of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools” (p. 28). A strong positive culture in a school is evident. It permeates every aspect of the school. It is evident through a community mentality in the school. Everything is shared. Peterson and Deal (1998) refer to these schools as places

- where staff have a shared sense of purpose, where they pour their hearts into teaching;
- where the underlying norms are of collegiality, improvement, and hard work;
- where student rituals and traditions celebrate student accomplishment, teacher innovation, and parental commitment;
- where the informal network of storytellers, heroes, and heroines provides a social web of information, support, and history;
- where success, joy, and humor abound. (p. 29)

Conversely, when negative school culture exists no one wants to be there. It is a place where there is unwillingness to change and “negativity dominates conversations, interactions, and planning . . .” They also contend that school leaders play a critical role in shaping school culture. Leaders are responsible for understanding the current culture, identifying core values, and providing a context to emphasize the positive and minimize the negative.

Culture is important, and in schools it has a direct impact on student achievement (Delisio, 2006). Haberman (2013) states “Culture is intangible, but it’s essential: you can walk into a school and know immediately whether you want to be there or not” (p. 1). He also says that principals are at a unique disadvantage when it comes to cultivating culture. Their preparation programs are not focused on organizational culture like many other managerial programs. Principals often attack specific problems in their schools as opposed to building a culture that allows for change or positive improvement. But the

right culture is important in schools. “Organizational culture is like the air that we breathe: invisible, intangible, and absolutely vital” (p. 2). “Without the attention of leaders, school cultures can become toxic and unproductive. By paying fervent attention to the symbolic side of their schools, leaders can help develop the foundation for change and success” (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 30).

What is Bullying?

Definitions and Types

The rise in awareness and interest in bullying and related topics has led to a great deal of conversation over what bullying actually is and is not. Olweus (1995) contends, “A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 197). Using Olweus’s work, Piskin (2002) notes that bullying must meet three specific criteria. First, the behavior must be aggressive and intended to cause harm. It must also take place repeatedly over a period of time. Secondly, it must represent an imbalance of power within an interpersonal relationship. Naylor, Cossin, Bettencourt, and Lemme (2006) include indirect aggression, such as relational aggression and social aggression, and note that bullying may not always be intended to cause harm.

In their study, Naylor et al. (2006) frame bullying in terms of power. They cite literature that highlights the abuse of mental or physical dominance and inequity of power as central to understanding bullying. Their work specifically focuses on the perspective of the teacher and the students as they define bullying. In their study, the authors aim to compare the definitions of bullying by teachers and students. The study

seeks to find trends in adolescent perceptions of bullying and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions designed to address bullying. The study examines the effects of gender, teacher/pupil status and bully/victim status on the definition of bullying. For the study, over 200 teachers and over 1800 students were asked to “Say what you think bullying is.” Their responses were analyzed and examined through the categories of bullying behavior and effects of bullying on the victim. The study found that when compared to students, teachers had a more complex definition of bullying including a broader scope of both direct, such as verbal and physical, and indirect, such as exclusionary behavior. Students, on the other hand, limited their definitions to more direct actions such as verbal and physical abuse.

Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) identify four primary types of bullying- physical, verbal, relational, and reactive. Physical bullying is direct and as such is readily identifiable. This type of bullying is most common among boys. It manifests itself through forms of physical aggression such as hitting. Verbal bullying is a bit tougher to detect than the physical and relies on words to inflict pain. Relational bullying is more common among girls. It relies on exclusionary behavior among peer groups. Reactive bullies tend to be the toughest to identify according to the authors. “These bullies tend to be impulsive, taunting others into fighting with them. Reactive bullies will fight back, but then claim self-defense” (p. 102).

Pisken (2002) also identifies four categories for bullying. These include physical bullying, verbal bullying, indirect bullying, and emotional bullying. Included in the

author's description of the types of bullying is a list of common bullying behaviors.

Common behaviors are as follows:

- Hitting
- Regular kicking or punching
- Pulling, pushing
- Threats
- Continuous teasing
- Being called hurtful names
- Being insulted or having their families insulted
- Any other verbal abuse
- Having lies and false rumors spread about them
- Having nasty notes written about them
- Being isolated from groups and being left out of games or activities
- Having their property damaged willfully
- Being forced to hand over money or goods through fear. (p. 556)

Cyberbullying. One recently emerging type of bullying is cyberbullying. In the realm of cyberbullying, Sameer Hinduja and Justin Patchin are emerging as prominent voices among the researchers. They codirect the Cyberbullying Research Center and have published books, reports, and articles on cyberbullying. In a recent issue of *Educational Leadership*, they explore the issue of cyberbullying and lay out simple proactive steps that principals can take. They address the emergence and impact of cyberbullying and explore what it might look like. They also provide some perspective and rationale on the growth of cyberbullying.

Because online communication tools have become an important part of their lives, it's not surprising that some kids have decided to use the technology to be malicious or menacing towards others. Teens are able to connect to technology 24/7, so they are susceptible to victimization (and able to act on emotions and mean intentions) around the clock. (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011, p. 49)

They define cyberbullying as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (p. 49). As online communication tools are becoming increasingly important and connected to the lives of teenagers they are also becoming an increasingly relevant tool for bullying. Anonymity and the lack of immediate response from the victim make cyberbullying easier for kids to become involved in. The authors point out that the “new bullying” can occur in two ways; at school through school owned media, or off campus using home computers and devices. They talk about how to respond and emphasize the importance of acknowledging the new bullying. As part of their work, the authors include proactive steps in the fight against cyberbullying. Educating the community and developing a school policy and plan are presented as simple steps towards prevention (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011).

Though the use of mass communication devices to communicate socially is a relatively new phenomenon, there is an emerging body of research that can provide some perspective. The Cyber Bullying Research Center, directed by Hinduja and Patchin, has published several studies chronicling the rise of technology use among teenagers and the coinciding incidents of cyberbullying. In a 2011 study, the Center reports that over 80% of students used a cell phone on a weekly basis and at least 50% of students used social networking sites such as Facebook on a weekly basis. One-fifth of the students surveyed reported that they had been victims of cyberbullying while 20% of the respondents report that they have cyber bullied others. The Center has also begun to produce research that links cyberbullying to school climate, self-esteem, and suicide (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011). In a more recent study from 2013 of about 400 middle school students and their

technology access over the previous 30 days, Patchin and Hinduja (2014) found that 97.5% of students have been online in the previous 30 days, 63% of those students have their own cell phone, 45% of the surveyed were on Facebook, 42% of them were on Instagram, 11.5% have been the target of cyberbullying during that time frame, and almost 4% have cyberbullied others in same time frame. In another study on the relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem, Patchin and Hinduja (2010) use a self-reporting survey of over 1900 middle school students to examine the relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem. They found a statistically significant relationship between the two, noting that students who engaged in cyberbullying as either the victim or the offender had lower self-esteem than students who had little or no experience with cyberbullying. They go on to emphasize the importance of recognition, education, and involvement of educators in combating incidents of cyberbullying.

Sbarbaro and Smith (2011) examined the phenomenon of cyberbullying among disadvantaged middle school students. They note that cyberbullying is inherently different from other types of bullying because of the anonymity associated with many forms of electronic communication. There is a strong correlation between age and cyberbullying as well as gender and cyberbullying. As students exposure to technological devices increases with age, so too does their exposure to cyberbullying, both as a victim and as a bully. Their study also highlighted the use of technologies such as Xbox, PlayStation, Wii, and PSP as tools for cyberbullying among males.

As cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon, and is perpetrated through nontraditional means it is important to include research that can illuminate possible

underlying factors. For cyberbullying behavior, values are shown to be a predictor. Responsibility, camaraderie, respect, honesty, tolerance, and being a pacifist are all shown to significantly impact cyberbullying behavior. Dilmaç and Aydoğan's (2010) study examined students' experiences with cyberbullying as compared to their responses on a values scale developed by Dilmaç. The findings indicate that stronger ratings on the aforementioned values lead to significantly less acts of cyberbullying. The authors state simply "individuals who hold moral judgments would be less likely to perform cyberbullying behavior" (p. 187). In the conclusion of the study, the authors point out that schools tend to try to separate value statements from instructional delivery. This may prove to be harmful in light of these findings. As such they make a plea to include some level of organized preventive counseling that would be centered on social values.

Welker (2010) studied the relationship of cyberbullying to school culture. Her study also examined the current interventions in place to limit cyberbullying. She used interviews of 10 middle school principals along with a focus group of five principals. The study examined interventions, both effective and ineffective, that are used to address cyberbullying. "The study's main findings highlighted the importance of understanding that principals' perceptions that prevention and intervention activities impact culture, indirect aggression, technology's influence over student behavior and principals' roles in teaching, learning, and leadership" (p. 1). The notion of principal perception influencing school culture will be a central focus of this study.

Why Do Kids Bully?

The question often comes up, why do kids bully? Understanding the causes of bullying might provide valuable insight into developing an approach to counteract the acts and the effects of bullying by getting at the heart of what pushes school children to engage in bullying in the first place.

In a yearlong study of 103 children ages 10 and 11, Henry (2004) found that bullying behavior could be related to factors in the home. Abuse and aggression in the home lead to patterns of aggressive behavior among school-aged children. Difficulty in problem solving with and among adults at home spawns difficulties problem-solving with peers. Children learn to deal with, or cope with, difficult experiences in certain ways. These methods are related to the strategies they choose when dealing with negative emotions. The research from this study concludes that children learn their coping strategies from the adults or models to which they are exposed. These behaviors are learned in the home and are often affected by stress or violence found in family breakdowns or separations. While many variables predicted student behavior, the key variable for the bully was identified as anger. Many bullies in their externalization of their negative emotions express anger.

Martín's (2005) study also found that factors at home can play a role in bullying at school. In her research, she found that being a victim at home led to greater behavior problems, including bullying, at school. She examined the relationship among siblings, finding that bully behavior among siblings is closely associated with bullying behavior among peers. She noted that victimization at home along with bullying at school led to

increased risk of significant behavior problems at school. She also explored the concept of the bully/victim or provocative or aggressive victim, which we will look at more closely in the section on characteristics of bullies and their victims.

A review of studies on the increase in bullying among adolescents as they transition into middle school contends that school and peer-level factors contribute to bullying and harassment (Pellegrini, 2002). The review discusses various approaches and factors surrounding bullying, victimization, and sexual harassment. Natural factors such as social roles and peer status increase as students transition to middle school. The associated aggression significantly influences bullying and victimization among students at this age. Peer groups are often supporting of this behavior. As such, bullying often becomes a means to an end as the leaders of peer groups use bullying to achieve their desired peer status. The review also found that adults often support this behavior and thus contribute to the ensuing bullying.

Fitzpatrick, Dulin, and Piko (2007) studied bullying among African American adolescents. Over 1,500 African American adolescents were given a self-report survey asking questions regarding bullying and risk behavior. The study explored the extent to which certain risk factors were associated with a student becoming involved in behaviors consistent with bullying. The study found that the bullying among the studied group was higher than that of the general population. They also found that age, family violence, negative peer relations, and behavioral risks were factors or causes of bullying among the studied group. The findings in this study support other research that I have cited relating

causes of bullying to age, family issues, and peer interactions (Henry, 2004; Martín, 2005; Pellegrini, 2002).

Characteristics of Bullies and Their Victims

The Bully

Several studies contain sections outlining the characteristics of the typical bully. Dan Olweus (1995) offers a list of typical characteristics in his work. He suggests that the most common attribute of the bully is their aggressiveness towards peers as well as towards adults. They are also “characterized by impulsivity and strong needs to dominate other people . . . they have little empathy with victims of bullying” and “If they are boys, they are likely to be physically stronger than boys in general, and victims in particular” (p. 197). Contrary to popular belief, Olweus notes that bullies are not insecure or abnormally anxious. Svoboda (2004) cites studies that show that bullies tend to be socially well adjusted. They tend to be psychologically strong and popular among their peers. Their bullying behavior is self-reinforcing and often earns approval from peers. She notes that the key lies in teaching others not to celebrate the behavior of bullies and to empower those bystanders to intervene. Similarly, Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) suggest that bullies are often popular and are in turn rewarded by their peer groups for their behavior. They also note that bullies tend to be impulsive, overly aggressive towards their peers, and enjoy dominating others. They also contend that bullies are short-tempered and struggle in dealing with frustration (Bullies and Their Victims, 2001; Hoover & Hazler, 1991; Batsche & Knoff, 1994).

The Victim

In general conversation, it would seem that the bully garners the majority of the attention and analysis. It is important to note here that research shows that the victim also exhibits certain characteristics. Olweus (1995) lists a set of characteristics of what he calls the “passive submissive victim” (p. 197). He states that victims “are often cautious, sensitive, and quiet . . . suffer from low self-esteem . . . they have a negative view of themselves” and “if they are boys, they are likely to be physically weaker than boys in general” (p. 197). Victims tend to be not only physically weaker, but also smaller in comparison to bullies. Victims tend to be frail and unable to defend themselves. They are insecure and cautious and tend to lack certain social skills that would allow them to develop friendships and relationships. As might be expected, victims additionally suffer from poor self-esteem and often see a deterioration of academic success as they move from lower grades in school to the middle and higher grades (Batsche, & Knoff, 1994; Bullies and Their Victims, 2001; Hoover & Hazler, 1991; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

The dynamic of the bully and the victim is further complicated by the phenomenon of the bully-victim. Research refers to this as the reactive bully or the provocative victim. These are children that both start fights and are victimized by others. They tend to be anxious and aggressive and are socially ostracized, even by their teachers. Even though they are victimized frequently, they tend to provoke bullies. They often provoke the bully into fighting and then claim self-defense. These children tend to have low self-esteem. More troubling is the implication that this is the child who may

play the role of the school shooter, unable to cope with the humiliation of being victimized (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Stokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Educators' Perceptions of Bullying

While it is important to understand the complexities of the bully and the victim, it is also necessary to understand how bullying is perceived in schools. In one study of bullying at the middle school level, 92% of the 198 eighth-grade students surveyed reported observing bullying with only 3% of those students reporting that they would tell a teacher (Harris & Petrie 2002). About half would tell another adult, such as a parent. Students also reported that 60% of teachers and 70% of administrators were “not interested” in addressing bullying. In addition to asking students about frequency of bullying and whom they would tell when bullied, the study also asked students what kinds of bullying they experienced as well as how they felt about bullying. Students reported being called names, teased, excluded, being hit or kicked, and most infrequently, threatened. Students who had been bullied reported feeling angry or miserable (Harris & Petrie 2002).

The teacher's perspective is also an integral component in examining perceptions of bullying within the school context. Hazler, Miller, Carney, and Green (2001) studied the ability of teachers and counselors to differentiate between bullying and other forms of conflict in their schools. They surveyed 251 participants and asked them to rate the severity of various scenarios and whether or not they were bullying. The study found that adults saw physical conflict as more severe than social or emotional abuse. The participants more often associated physical conflict with bullying. This was true even

when the physically aggressive behavior did not meet the definition of bullying. The results of the study speak to the adults' ability to identify and thus, appropriately address bullying.

Beyond the teacher, it is important to examine the principals' perspective of bullying in their schools. While most principals see bullying as a serious issue, many struggle with the complexities of bullying and the variety of forms it takes. In a study focusing on school safety and bullying related to sexual orientation, in excess of 1,500 school principals were surveyed via the Internet. The study found that many principals see bullying based on sexual orientation as a problem and believed that LGBT students would not feel safe at their school. While most schools had some sort of anti-bullying program, they did not have strategies specifically targeting bullying related to sexual orientation. This study is important as it highlights the gaps in the awareness, understanding, and approach to various forms of bullying in schools (The Principal's Perspective, 2008).

The Effects and Implications of Bullying

Of the more concerning aspects of bullying are the long-term effects and implications that accompany it. In a particularly interesting study, Olweus (2011) examined the correlation between bullying at school and later criminality. The study focused on males. His study was intended to examine whether or not a correlation exists between being identified as a bully in school and being associated with criminal behavior later in life. In the longitudinal study, Olweus examined prospective associations being reported between bullying and criminality over an 8-year period from ages 16 to 24. The

study found a strong correlation, with 55% of identified bullies being convicted of one or more crimes. The findings provide strong support for the continued study of bullying and the implementation of solid positive, proactive interventions for students with identified risk factors for bullying. Baldry (2014) also examined the links between bullying behavior and future criminal behavior. She notes that bullying in school is a specific risk factor and predictor for future violence.

In considering the implications of bullying on its victims, I looked at studies designed to specifically examine the victim. One study in particular sought to examine the psychological effects of bullying on victims. Students between the ages of 12 and 19 were surveyed. Each participant was given two surveys to measure bullying experiences and emotional distress. The study revealed that there was a correlation between symptoms of emotional distress and bullying. The results of the study also showed higher incidents of bullying among girls. The study indicates that there are lasting psychological effects for victims from bullying and that monitoring of relationships and activities among secondary students is necessary (Ayenibiowo & Akinbode, 2011).

In another study by Adams and Lawrence (2011), the long-term effects of victimization were analyzed. The study sought to find whether or not bullying victims continued to show the effects of being bullied after enrolling in college. Over 200 undergraduate students were given a self-report survey discussing the lasting results of bullying. Feelings of safety, isolation, threats of physical harm, and teasing were measured. The study found at significant levels that the effects, including continued victimization, did in fact last into college. These findings provide valuable literature and

foundation addressing the long-term effects of victimization as well as a strong call to action.

In addition to the bully and the victim, there is research that suggests that there are also lasting implications of bullying on the bystander. In their study on the mental health implications of witness status, Rivers, Poteat, and Ashurst (2009) examined the impact of bullying on those who witness it. The study surveyed 2000+ students from ages 12 to 16 on bullying, substance abuse, and mental health risk. The authors found that risk for mental health concerns was actually higher for those who witnessed bullying than those who were involved. This study particularly highlights the narrow focus of the implication for bullying on witnesses and makes the case for intervention even stronger.

In considering the effects and implications of bullying, Rethon, Head, Klineberg, and Stansfeld (2011) looked at the effect social support can have on staving off the adverse consequences of bullying on school achievement and mental health. Participating students were given a series of surveys (one longitudinal) that measured responses for bullying, educational achievement, depressive symptoms, and social support. The study found that those who were bullied struggled more academically and exhibited depressive symptoms. Results showed that social support could help students academically, but not without mental health issues. The study highlights the need for early intervention and support from schools for students experiencing issues related to bullying.

Legal Foundations and Implications for Principals

Bullying can be a complex legal issue. While there is a relatively small amount of case law (none at the Supreme Court level) that deals with bullying and cyberbullying directly, there is law (Title IX) and a significant amount of relevant case law that addresses several of the issues typically involved in bullying and cyberbullying cases. These cases deal with free speech protections as well as harassment in schools. In most cases, the existing law can be applied to cases of bullying.

Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides some of the legal framework. Title IX states “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance . . .” (1964). Title IX, as we know it today was updated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Although Title IX has gained most of its attention from gender discrimination in athletics, it has also been applied to claims of harassment in schools based on gender. It is important to note that it has not been held to apply to situations where harassment has been claimed on the basis of sexuality (Cambron-McCabe, McCarthy, & Thomas, 2004).

Three Supreme Court cases provide particular direction for issues surrounding student speech and harassment. The first is the landmark *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969) decision. In the case, three high school students decided to wear black armbands in protest of the Vietnam War. Several schools in the area chose to ban the armbands fearing that they would cause a disturbance in the school. The students wore the armbands in defiance of the rule and refused to remove

them when asked. They were subsequently suspended. The families later sued claiming a violation of the students' First Amendment free speech protections. The Supreme Court agreed and in so doing established a significant precedent. The Court determined that the school "failed to show that the forbidden conduct would substantially interfere with appropriate school discipline" (Tinker, n.d., para. 3). Schools were now required to show that a student's speech would create a significant disruption before prohibiting their speech.

The next significant Supreme Court ruling came with the *Bethel School District No. 403 v. Fraser* (1986) decision. This decision considered the case of a student who gave a speech in a school assembly that made several sexual references. The school had a rule that prohibited obscene speech and suspended the student. The student's family sued the school district claiming a violation of his free speech protections. The Court sided with the school claiming that the school had a substantial interest in censoring language that was lewd, vulgar, or obscene (Bethel, n.d.).

Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier (1988) examined a school's right to exercise editorial control over a student run school newspaper. The newspaper in question contained articles that the school administration deemed to be inappropriate. The students brought suit claiming a violation of free speech protections. The Court ruled that "educators did not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control over the content of student speech so long as their actions were 'reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns'" (Hazelwood, n.d., para. 3).

These cases are typically and justifiably applied to First Amendment concerns. They are not limited to free speech considerations however. Understanding and applying these cases to situations involving student harassment can provide critical framework for determining a school's responsibility with regard to bullying. Cyberbullying in particular often contains free speech considerations. For example, a student creates a web page that uses lewd or vulgar language to defame another student and in turn creates a hostile environment for the student and a subsequent disruption of the business of school.

Three other Supreme Court decisions provide specific guidance in relation to Title IX. In *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools* (1992), a student claimed a Title IX violation after her teacher had repeatedly sexually harassed her. She sought damages related to the claim but was denied. The court concluded, "That a damages remedy is available for an action brought to enforce Title IX. The judgment of the Court of Appeals, therefore, is reversed, and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this opinion" (Franklin, n.d., para. 3).

Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent School District (1988) involved a student who was involved in a sexual relationship with her teacher and was caught. She filed suit claiming that her Title IX protections were violated and sought damages. *Gebser* established that a school must reasonably know or have knowledge about the harassment and must fail to take reasonable action. The Court found that the school was not liable since it did not know and therefore could not show "deliberate indifference" (Gebser, n.d., para. 3). The "deliberate indifference" standard has become a key standard in issues of bullying and cyberbullying in schools.

Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education (1999) reaffirmed the “deliberate indifference” standard established by *Gebser*. The Court also established that damages could be sought in certain situations. In this case a student sued the school claiming the school failed to prevent sexual harassment of the student at the hands of another student in violation of her Title IX protections. The Court ruled that a school could be held liable for damages when they displayed “deliberate indifference” (Davis, n.d., para. 3).

Examining these six Supreme Court rulings provide a great deal of direction for administrators. They have provided standards and tests that can be applied in cases of bullying. Free speech, discrimination, and harassment are all principles from these cases that are directly related to issues of bullying while tests such as “Tinker” and “Deliberate Indifference” provide some clear foundational direction for administrators in relation to their obligation surrounding bullying. Several lesser court rulings have applied these Supreme Court decisions to cases involving technology use for speech or harassment. *Coy v. Board of Education*, 2002; *Flaherty v. Keystone Oaks School District*, 2003; *J.S. v. Bethlehem Area School District*, 2002; and *Mahaffey ex rel. Mahaffey v. Aldrich*, 2002 have all made determinations based in standards set forth in the previous Supreme Court cases.

The courts have not been without some conflict on these issues. In the recent ruling of *Layshock v. Hermitage School District* (2010) the Third Circuit Court of Appeals held that a student’s rights had been violated when a school sanctioned him for creating a fictitious MySpace profile of the school principal. The court determined that since the student’s actions took place away from school and they did not create a

significant disruption at school the school went too far in sanctioning him (FindLaw Staff, 2010). This ruling was in apparent contradiction with the same court's ruling in the *Blue Mountain School District v. J.S.* (2010) case. Although the facts of the case were similar, the Court ruled that the student's actions would reasonably cause a disruption of the school's business and upheld the sanction. The Court has agreed to deliberate on the two cases and provide clarification (Roth, 2010). In the *Layshock* decision, the Court cited several cases reaffirming the school's right to sanction when the speech created a significant disruption at school. Those decisions were *J.S. v. Bethlehem Area Sch. District* (2002); *Wisniewski v. Board of Education of Weedsport Central School District* (2007); and *Doninger v. Niehoff* (2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2011).

In its 2009 session, the General Assembly of the state of North Carolina passed Senate Bill 526, known as the School Violence Prevention Act. The bill deals directly with harassment and bullying in schools by making such behavior a crime. It also clearly holds school officials accountable to address harassing behavior. The bill clearly defines bullying behavior and even highlights the use of electronic communications. The language of the opening clauses of the bill lay out the reasoning and severity with which this law was enacted:

Whereas, the General Assembly of North Carolina finds that a safe and civil environment in school is necessary in order for students to learn and achieve high academic standards; and
 Whereas, bullying and harassment, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe environment; and
 Whereas, bullying and harassing behaviors create a climate that fosters violence in our schools; and

Whereas, it is essential to enact a law that seeks to protect the health and welfare of North Carolina students and improve the learning environment for North Carolina students; and

Whereas, to do so, State and national data and anecdotal evidence have established the need to identify the most vulnerable targets and potential victims of bullying and harassment; and

Whereas, the sole purpose of this law is to protect all children from bullying and harassment, and no other legislative purpose is intended nor should any other intent be construed from passage of this law; (School Violence, 2009)

The bill defines “bullying or harassing behavior” as any pattern of behavior, including electronic communications, which places a student in “reasonable fear of harm” or creates a “hostile environment” (School Violence, 2009). The bill also establishes requirements for school districts to establish policy preventing bullying or harassing behavior.

One of North Carolina’s largest school districts, Guilford County Schools, used the North Carolina School Violence Prevention Act to refine their policies for a harassment-free environment for students. As is seen in this excerpt, Guilford County Schools makes a point of highlighting cyberbullying in their policy:

Harassment, bullying and discrimination are expressly prohibited by the Guilford County Board of Education. Harassment, bullying and discrimination are defined as conduct intended to intimidate, discredit, injure or disturb a student or groups of students to the extent that the behavior causes mental and/or physical harm to students and is sufficiently severe, persistent and pervasive so that it creates a learning environment that is intimidating, threatening or abusive. Harassment, bullying and discrimination can occur face to face, in writing or through use of electronic means such as the Internet, emailing or text messaging. Cyber bullying can include the use of personal web sites to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behavior intended to cause harm to persons or groups. (Guilford County Schools, 2008)

The policy shows the extent to which North Carolina and its local school districts have gone to highlight the issue and its implications.

The legislative branch of the Federal Government is also further examining information and policy in federal agencies surrounding bullying. In recent testimony before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Linda Calbom (2012) testified that in her research, she found that bullying is a serious problem and carries civil rights implications. She found that a student's protections against bullying depended largely on the laws or policies where they live and attend school. She recommended a coordination of federal and state agencies to compile information about various civil rights laws and policies as well as detailed demographic information on bullying victims as a means of informing policy makers as they seek possible protections for vulnerable groups.

Principals charged with addressing issues of school bullying must be aware of the legal framework surrounding it. Essex (2011) points out that a school employee can be held liable in incidents of bullying where injury occurs. The school's liability can come from deliberate acts committed by school officials or from acts of negligence. Students who are harmed by school personnel can seek injunctive relief and even monetary damages. Further, the school official's actions can be intentional or unintentional. Bullying requires constant oversight and action by school personnel. Legally speaking, the school has a duty to protect.

Prevention/Intervention

The research clearly indicates that bullying is a problem with serious implications for schools (Essex, 2011). While schools face a growing awareness of bullying and seeming exponential implications it is critical to understand how to approach intervention and prevention. So what does the research say can be done about bullying? What are the components to a viable program or approach for bully prevention? Dan Olweus (2001), a leading voice among the researchers on bullying, says

The basic message is clear: bullying is a large problem in schools, but with a suitable intervention programme, it is possible to considerably reduce it. An effective anti-bullying programme can be implemented relatively easily and without major cost; it is primarily a question of changing attitudes, knowledge, behavior and routines in school life. (p. 26)

Limber points out that in the development of his bullying prevention program, Olweus focused on four key principles: warmth and positive involvement by adults, creating clear boundaries for unacceptable behavior, consistent consequences for breaking rules, and adults acting as the authorities and the positive role models (Olweus & Limber, 2010). Olweus (2001) recommends several components for his plan. He places the components into four general categories; general prerequisites, measures at the school level, measures at the class level, and measures at the individual level. Various components are further designated as a core component or a highly desirable component. Among the general prerequisites, Olweus says there must be awareness and an involvement by the adults. In school level measures he includes school conference days, effective supervision, and teacher discussion groups aimed at increasing awareness. Class level measures include

class rules, meetings with students, and meeting with parents. For individuals, Olweus recommends direct conversations with bullies, victims, and their parents. He also recommends individual intervention plans for affected students. Olweus's approach is proactive in nature and approaches the issue of bullying through an open and direct method designed to improve awareness and confidence in dealing with bullying.

Olweus has designed and implemented a bullying prevention program that has been implemented in both Norway and the United States. The program is comprehensive and school-wide and is designed to not only reduce bullying, but to also improve student peer relationships. Olweus and Limber (2010) compiled and analyzed several studies of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. In studying the program's implementation as part of a national campaign in Norway, she found that there were significant reductions in self-reports of anti-social behavior, improvements in social climate, including improvements in students' satisfaction with school, better peer relationships, and better discipline within the school.

The National Schools Framework was Australia's attempt at an integrated national policy for bullying (Cross et al., 2001). The program was designed and implemented in 2003 to prevent violence, bullying, and other aggressive behaviors in Australia's schools. A 2007 study of the program using cross sectional data of adolescents and teachers concluded that incidents of bullying remained relatively unchanged. The study found that the program had not been fully implemented. In addition, limitations within the methodology limited the research findings. As one of the first countries to implement a national program to address bullying, Australia based its

program on six key elements. “The elements include: (a) schools’ values, ethos, culture, structures, and student welfare; (b) policies, programs, and procedure; (c) education/training for school staff, students, and parents; (d) managing incidents of victimization; (e) providing support for students; and (f) working closely with parents” (p. 398).

In a study of the association between school safety measures and peer victimization, Blossnich and Bossarte (2001) examined whether or not school safety measures correlated to student reports of bullying. Data for their study came from the 2007 Crime Supplement of the National Crime Victimization Survey. The authors use the study to correlate school safety measures to degrees of victimization. In the study, they found that adults were the single greatest deterrents to being bullied in school, noting that adults in the hallways was the only measure that resulted in significant odds of reduction of bullying for students. The study supports the role of the adult in the prevention of bullying in schools.

Principals’ Perceptions of Bullying and School Climate

As shown in the introduction, concern over issues related to bullying in schools has expanded into the national spotlight in the last several years. As such, there have been a multitude of authors who have contributed to the discussion and research on the topic. In 2011 alone, *Educational Leadership*, a leading journal for school administrators, has dedicated two entire issues to related topics. The most recent issue, titled, “Promoting Respectful Schools,” is dedicated entirely to various aspects of bullying in schools. One article in particular facilitates the discussion of the relationship

between overall respect in the school and the culture in the school. Beaudoin (2011) focuses on the environment for the adults in a school as a means of affecting total school culture. She contends that adults who feel stressed and disrespected will act in kind to their students. She states, “Whether we like it or not, creating a school culture of respect starts deep in the heart of a staff’s well-being and professional relationships” (p. 40). She concludes with the importance of the administrator in providing and modeling a safe and inclusive school culture for the adults which will translate to total school culture.

Smith and Birney (2005) examine the relationship between organizational trust (faculty trust in clients, colleagues and their principal) in a school and student bullying. In their quantitative study, teachers were given two scales to measure school bullying and faculty trust. Among other aspects of trust, the study examined the level of faculty trust in the principal. The study found that the better the organizational trust, the lesser the prevalence of student bullying. Also the greater the degree of faculty trust, the greater the amount of teacher protection of students from bullying was evident. While the study did not necessarily find a relationship between the level of trust of a faculty in the principal and student bullying, the study did reaffirm the principal’s role in ensuring that the school staff operated with the level of vigilance and intervention necessary to address bullying.

A study in *Health Education & Behavior* sought to explore how principals’ perceived bully prevention practices in their schools (Dake, Price, Telljohann, & Funk, 2004). The study of 700 principals found that only one in five schools used common strategies even when barriers were perceived to be low. Principals saw post-bullying

activities as the most effective means of addressing bullying problems. The study also found that principals generally saw bullying as less of a problem in their school than in their counterparts. They concluded that more training was needed for principals to understand comprehensive and effective bully prevention practices. The authors conclude “The most effective approach is a ‘whole school’ approach that incorporates multiple activities in order to decrease bullying problems” (p. 373).

In another study from the *Journal of School Violence*, principals’ ratings on various items related to student safety also indicate that a comprehensive school approach is necessary with the principal working to coordinate data and resources to ensure that school safety is a priority (Sprague, Smith, & Stieber, 2002). For this study, all school principals in Oregon were asked to participate. Principals were asked to rate to what extent 15 risk and 15 protective factors known to buffer against school violence and discipline problems were evident in their schools. The survey also included 5 open-ended questions on school safety. The study found that bullying and harassment was a top risk factor in school safety. It further found that principals rated academic priorities as their highest priority followed by school safety and discipline. Overall, principals saw their schools as safe places. This study allows us to see how principals view risk and protective factors in their schools. It shows an understanding and focus on students’ interactions with one another and with adults in the school and a need to focus on those interactions. The authors implore a focus on changing the culture in schools by stating

Nationally, nearly 40% of middle and high school students report that bullying, harassment and mean spirited teasing negatively affects their academic performance, attendance, and peer relationships. This pattern of chronic negative

interactions is strongly related to more serious forms of violence and delinquency in school and communities (Colvin, Kameenui & Sugai, 1993; Patterson, Reid & Dishon, 1992). As such, changing the culture of harassment and bullying in schools would likely move us closer to the goal of violence free schools. (Sprague et al., 2002, p. 61)

Flynt and Morton (2008) looked at principal perceptions of bullying in relation to students with disabilities. In a survey of 75 random Alabama elementary school principals, the researchers found that principals largely saw bullying as a minor problem in their schools. They did however find that principals were open and welcoming to training for teachers designed to address bullying of students with disabilities.

In another study published by the National Association of Secondary School, Harris and Hathorn (2006) provide further insight into the perceptions of principals of bullying their schools. Their study highlights the different levels of awareness of bullying between principals and students. Their study finds that most principals see their schools as safe and supportive environments that have staffs that are also supportive of student needs. The authors point out that the principals' responses are in contradiction to other research that reveals that students in general have a very different perspective. In their recommendations, the authors contend that "The school principal must promote a school climate that allows children to learn in a safe environment" (p. 66), further strengthening the contention that school climate with relation to bullying affects other factors such as academic performance.

Summary

Bullying is a complex issue. It can happen for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways. Schools are especially vulnerable. Even with the existing and emerging

literature, there is still work to be done to understand it. One critical area that still needs to be explored is the extent to which an administrator can impact and respond to bullying. I believe that the principal plays a pivotal role in the culture of a school and as such, can shape the culture of a school as it relates to bullying. As mentioned in the introduction to this work, this study will seek to determine how attitudes and experiences affect how principals perceive bullying, how principals of schools that have positive, anti-bullying cultures perceive their impact on the culture with regard to bullying at a school site, how those principals lead on the issue of bullying, and what components those principals deem necessary to build a comprehensive approach to school bullying.

Conceptual Framework

The following is a visual description of how this study will be conceptualized. Figure 1 represents how each portion of this study is developed. In the primary circle there is the principal. The principal is at the heart of this study. Everything else either influences or is influenced by the principal. This begins with the legal and policy guidelines found in the box at the far left. These serve as a minimum standard for principals as they approach issues related to bullying. Next you will see the boxes containing attitudes, perceptions, and experiences. These are the factors that should influence how the principal internalizes bullying and thus how they approach it beyond the minimum standards established by law and policy.

Once there is an understanding of who the principal is and how he/she perceives bullying, I will explore how that influences the principal's practices, protocols, programs, and speech related to bullying. These components should then lead to the development

of culture in the school as it relates to bullying. That culture is found in the triangle. For the purposes of this framework, the triangle is intended to represent the interplay of culture among students, teachers, and the principal.

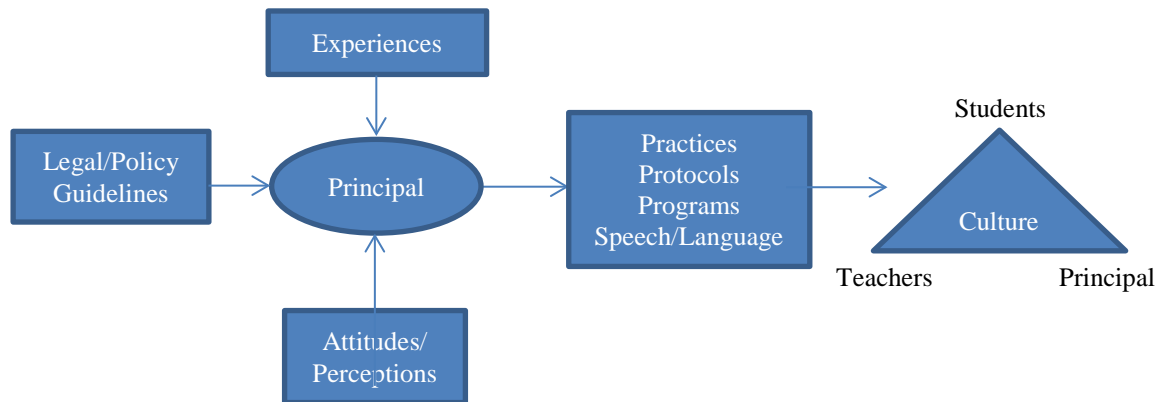


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: The Principal and School Culture as it Relates to Bullying.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Traditions

School bullying is a serious and often times polarizing topic. It can generate a bevy of emotions ranging from denial to anger. I believe that it is also a misunderstood phenomenon. While this topic can be explored through a variety of methods, I believe it can best be understood by looking closely inside the environment to gain the perspectives of the people involved and by focusing on a few individual school approaches to bullying. For this reason, I chose to use a qualitative approach for this study. Lichtman (2010) described the qualitative approach as “a way of knowing that assumes that the researcher gathers, organizes, and interprets information with his or her eyes and ears as a filter” (p. 7). By examining school bullying through the principal’s leadership and actions, I believe that this study produced rich insight into the administrator’s ability to influence the culture of bullying in a particular school. As a result, this study took the form of a narrative, or story, which was designed to relay the dynamic experiences of the selected schools and the administrators’ roles as they approach bullying.

In the study, I examined the issue of bullying through the lived experiences of school level leaders such as administrators, administrative staff, counselors, and teacher leaders. I used a case study approach for the study, highlighting three exemplar case studies. Lichtman (2010) described the exemplary case as one that would be nominated

by a school district as a model for other schools in a particular area, such as bullying prevention in this case. For each case study, I examined both the school and the principal as part of the case. It was the principal however, who served as the central focus of my work. I will elaborate on the selection method for participating schools later in this chapter.

As stated in Chapter II, I believe that many administrators are experiencing a public outcry regarding their responsibility to recognize and eliminate bullying. While I considered a phenomenological approach in which I would interview several principals, I chose the case study approach because I believed that by studying a few exemplar schools and their principals I would be able not only hear the principals' voices but also be able to gain better insight into their leadership and impact on culture by delving deeper into their schools' practices. I believe that many administrators are leading their schools and accomplishing great work in this area. However, because of increased reports of bullying in the media, these stories of positive practice seem to be lost. The case study approach gave voice and opportunity to the administrators on the front line by looking closely at the schools and programs they lead. As I conducted the study and listened to each participant speak, I was able to learn about the product of their work and leadership.

Key Concepts and Terms

This study dealt extensively with the concepts of bullying and school culture. I also focused heavily on the school administrator in this study. For the purposes of this study, the school administrator represented the principal and the terms are interchanged with one another during this study. This is the person at each school site who is the final

word in matters of discipline, policy, and procedure. The assistant principal is not included in this context. The effective principal referred to principals of schools that have positive, anti-bullying cultures as defined by the School Safety Office and the Office of Character Development and corroborated by their regional support office within the school system of study. Bullying referred to behavior that is perpetrated by one student and is intended to intimidate another student. This can include any form of discrimination or harassment. Olweus's (1995) definition, "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p. 197), serves as a guide for defining bullying in this study. School culture is defined as the overall atmosphere as it related to bullying in a school. This included the rules, procedures, protocols, norms, attitudes, and perceptions related to acts of bullying in a school. Both bullying and culture were examined in more detail in Chapter II.

Setting and Participants

Bullying is a pervasive problem throughout American society. I believe that no school is immune from incidents of bullying. This includes elementary, middle, and high schools as well as nontraditional and alternative settings. We do know, however, that there are administrators and schools that are successfully addressing bullying and have implemented strategies or programs that have minimized the overall effects of bullying. This study examined one exemplary case from each of the three levels of traditional schools, elementary, middle, and high. Schools were selected from a large urban district in central North Carolina and were identified using the school district's School Safety

Office and the Office of Character Development. Selection focused on schools with comprehensive and successful bully prevention programs.

I understood from the beginning of this study that data surrounding bullying is often difficult to quantify. It is at times over reported while at other times under reported. In addition, data are often misunderstood or misrepresented. As such, I was content to rely on a great deal of anecdotal data for selection of the participating schools. In addition to the anecdotal data, however, the school district provided rich trend data to support the selection of the case study schools.

In cooperation with the school district, we decided to use two primary data sources to identify schools for the study. First, the suspension rate for rule 8 violations for each school was reviewed. Rule 8 in the district policy handbook addresses all disrespectful behavior including, but not limited to, bullying. Secondly the Student Safety Perceptions Survey results were reviewed. Grades 4, 7, and 10 complete the survey designed to measure student perceptions of their school in various areas including safety and attentiveness of the adults in their school to their needs. Both data sources over two consecutive years (2011-2012 to 2012-2013) were used to determine schools that had established positive trends.

The two schools from each level; elementary, middle, and high school, with the greatest positive trends in the two measures were identified as potential case studies. Each school's School Support Administrator (SSA) from their respective region within the district crosschecked each of the identified schools' data. This crosscheck was intended to ensure reliability of the selected schools. All SSA's approved each of the six

schools for study. As such I invited the highest scoring school from each level to participate in the study. Each school principal graciously agreed to participate. Table 1 contains information to explain how the data were collected and compared for use in this study. Negative numbers for rule 8 suspension rate and positive numbers for the Student Safety Perceptions Survey indicate positive trend data. I will elaborate on each participating school in Chapter IV.

Table 1

Trend Data for School Selection Process

School	2011-2012 Suspension Rate	2012-2013 Suspension Rate	Diff.	2011-12 Do you feel safe at school?*	2012-13 Do you feel safe at school?*	Diff.
Donald Arthur Mattingly Elementary School	4	1	-3	47%	67%	+20%
George Herman Ruth Middle School	39	25	-14	56%	67%	+11%
Henry Louis Gehrig High School	3	1	-2	94%	95%	+1%

* Agree or Strongly agree

The participants for this study comprised four staff members from each of the three participating schools for a total for a total of twelve participants. The principal at each school was interviewed and subsequently asked to identify other leaders from the school who could speak to the school's approach to bullying. The remaining participants

for each case study included a combination of administrative staff, guidance counselors, and teacher leaders. Participants were invited to participate in the study via email. Each participant was based at their respective participating school, had some form of leadership role as defined by the principal, and were able to offer expertise on the school's approach to bullying as a result of the principal's leadership. Principals were asked, to the greatest extent possible, to provide a diverse (experience, position, etc.) sampling of participants. Table 2 provides a list of participants and highlights the diversity of position with each school as well as each participant's years of experience. I was able to spend well in excess of an hour talking with each participant with the formal recorded interviews each lasting on average between 45 minutes and an hour.

Table 2

List of Participants

Participant (pseudonym)	School	Position	Gender	Years at School	Years in Education
Mrs. Stengel	Donald Arthur Mattingly Elementary School	Principal	Female	8	21
Ms. Mantle	Donald Arthur Mattingly Elementary School	Counselor	Female	5	13
Mrs. Berra	Donald Arthur Mattingly Elementary School	Third Grade Teacher	Female	9	23
Mrs. Dimaggio	Donald Arthur Mattingly Elementary School	Pre-K Teacher	Female	9	15

Table 2

(Cont.)

Participant (pseudonym)	School	Position	Gender	Years at School	Years in Education
Mrs. Rizzuto	George Herman Ruth Middle School	Principal	Female	4	14
Mr. Munson	George Herman Ruth Middle School	Assistant Principal	Male	2	6
Mrs. Howard	George Herman Ruth Middle School	Counselor	Female	12	28
Mrs. Martin	George Herman Ruth Middle School	Counselor	Female	7	14
Mr. Guidry	Henry Louis Gehrig High School	Principal	Male	2.5	14
Ms. Dickey	Henry Louis Gehrig High School	Magnet Coordinator	Female	3	12
Mrs. Ford	Henry Louis Gehrig High School	Counselor	Female	2	15
Ms. Maris	Henry Louis Gehrig High School	Social Worker	Female	6	13

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using semi-structured interviews and on-site observations. Participants were interviewed at their respective schools and all but two interviews were conducted in the office or classroom of the participant. The remaining two interviews took place in the school's conference room. As a result, one interview in

particular was interrupted a few times as three different school staff members came through the room. I was concerned that the interruptions would compromise the integrity of the interview. The participant seemed at ease, however, and after analysis of the interview transcript, I am confident that the interruptions did not disrupt the integrity of the interview process.

Each interview began with a general rapport building set of questions and lasted an average of 45 minutes to an hour of formal recorded time. Gender, general age, race, comfort level of participant, and type of school in which they are serving were noted in writing prior to beginning the interview. I also asked various essential demographic questions such as years of experience in current role, total years' experience in education, other experiences in educational leadership, and any other related experience. These questions were a vital part of the data as they were designed to provide insight into the background of school leaders. The interview also contained questions related to each participant's experiences with bullying, opinions of bullying in general and at their school, their approach to bullying, their challenges related to bullying (real and perceived), professional development they have received targeted at eliminating bullying, and their protocols and procedures for addressing bullying in their schools. There were two separate interview protocols. One targeted administrators (Appendix A) while the other targeted other school staff (Appendix B). Both protocols addressed the same general focus areas.

Triangulation was important for this study. Observations, interviews, and data were all necessary to develop an accurate representation of each school. Observations

were used to gain a general sense of understanding at each school site as well as to provide some validation to the participants' responses to the research questions. In addition, observations served to provide some perspective for the data used to identify each school. During the interviews, I spoke with administrators and teacher leaders. It was important to see how their vision and leadership emerged in the schools in which they served. The observations were designed to examine that link. Observations were both formal and informal and took place at the selected school sites. Each time I entered the school for a visit or a scheduled interview, I took the opportunity to observe and take notes about the environment. Each site was also formally observed twice and included various settings during the visits. Settings included, but were not limited to, recess, lunch service, hallway transitions, and dismissal. During each formal observation, I focused on student interactions with one another, teacher interactions with students, teacher interactions with other teachers, and any interventions or areas of focus on the part of the adults who were supervising students that might have been related to the school's focus on bully prevention (Appendix C). Some observations were guided, meaning that a staff member accompanied me during the observation. During the guided observations, a school staff member was available to answer any questions I had about the setting or the observed interactions. Specific data from the formal observations are discussed, as relevant, in Chapter IV. Table 3 summarizes the formal observation settings for each participating site.

Table 3

Observation Matrix

School	Setting	Duration	Guided (Yes/No)
Donald Arthur Mattingly Elem.	Lunch Service	1 Hour	No
Donald Arthur Mattingly Elem.	Recess	1 Hour	No
George Herman Ruth Middle	Lunch Service (6 th Grade)	1 Hour	Yes
George Herman Ruth Middle	Dismissal (Hall to Buses- 8 th Grade)	35 Minutes	Yes
Henry Louis Gehrig High	Office Arrival/Reception	1 Hour	No
Henry Louis Gehrig High	Lunch Service	1 Hour	Yes

Data Analysis

Each interview transcript was read and examined multiple times. Early readings served to familiarize myself with the data and to ensure adequate understanding. Subsequent readings included a coding process. To facilitate this process, I used Lichtman's (2010) three C's: coding, categorizing, and identifying concepts. As interviews were read, general themes began to emerge. During further readings, I applied codes and categorized data. I used the categories to create a matrix that assisted me as I organized the data. Each category was grouped by broader themes and further disaggregated into subcategories. The matrix identified each participant by school and their responses to the interview questions as they related to the themes and categories. A

refined version of most of the identified categories persisted into the headings and subheadings for the data analysis in Chapter IV. Based on the interview protocols, I expected to see codes pertaining to, but not limited to, attitudes, practices, programs, and culture related to bullying in each school. As depicted in the conceptual framework for this study, I also expected the analysis to reveal that there are direct links between the principal's experiences, attitudes, and perceptions and the language and actions of the principal with regard to bullying. Once codes and links were established information was grouped into categories and further grouped by overarching themes. Implications and recommendations for administrators were identified and explored. There were some inconsistencies and conflicting viewpoints among participants at two of the participating schools, primarily as it related to communication and vision. These inconsistencies and conflicting viewpoints are included and explored in the context in which they were provided in Chapters IV and V of this work.

The observations for this study served to establish some context between the school and human participants. I was able to use the observations to get a sense or "feel" for the overall culture within each respective school site. Notes from each observation were examined immediately after the observation was completed and a reflective analysis was done. This analysis served to identify themes and patterns of behavior. Each observation was then reevaluated and a new reflective analysis completed after conducting the interviews of the staff at the respective site. This analysis sought to determine congruency (or lack thereof) with the themes identified during the staff interviews.

Subjectivity

My subjectivity is a critical component in this study. Through my professional role, my interest in this topic increased and served as a building block for my personal perspectives and opinions. As a child I had very limited exposure to bullying. While I did have some negative interactions with peers, they never rose to levels commiserate with the definitions of bullying provided in this work. In addition, I tended to be somewhat empathetic by nature and as a result avoided interactions with those who would be identified as bullies. In contrast, my role as an educator has exposed me to various scenarios in which bullying was involved. These experiences create a professional bias for my research. I have developed a disdain for bullying behavior but more importantly, I have developed a deep curiosity around the influence I can personally have over the culture surrounding bullying in my own school.

In my current role, I serve as an administrator at a public school and issues related to bullying have become a focal point in my work. This is true both at the school and the school district level as I am involved in various initiatives within my school and the school district that target bully prevention. Over the years I have experienced varying levels of bullying in my schools. Incidents have ranged from minor incidents of name-calling to intense and severe harassment using online social mediums. I regularly intervene to protect students from incidents of bullying. Additionally, I have become concerned that the conversation about bullying so often omits the administrator's perspective and expertise. Certainly many administrators have expertise and success in addressing bullying in their schools. Others, however, often dismiss bullying as not

being a serious problem. I believe that in these cases this is in part because there has been such intense scrutiny coupled with a lack of verified and trusted resources, such as professional development or exemplar schools identified, to address the issue. I also serve on my school district's Harassment, Bullying, and Discrimination Committee, which works to create policy and protocols for addressing bullying within our district. Throughout this study I have tried to be reflective on my subjectivities and how they affect my work.

Trustworthiness

The data collection process in this study was designed to allow me an opportunity to gain an understanding of each site and each participant's role at his or her site. Each interview was designed to last a minimum of 45 minutes. While some interviews fell slightly short of that standard, most went beyond the desired duration. Follow-up questions were asked to ensure that both the length and the depth of responses were sufficient to produce the data needed to validate the research.

Observations lasted for the duration of the opportunity presented in the setting. For example, observations during a lunch service began before students arrived to the cafeteria and persisted until all students were clear from that setting. Observations during a school's dismissal persisted through the entire period of time it took to exit classes and leave campus.

Additionally, research participants were given the opportunity to review the collected data. Each participant was emailed the verbatim transcript from their interview and invited to provide any additions, deletions, or clarifications they deemed necessary

the best reflect their thoughts and ideas. No participant chose to add to or clarify his or her thoughts surrounding the information shared in their interview session. Three peer reviewers examined the interpretation of data and offered expertise and feedback. All three of the reviewers received their doctorate in educational leadership and served as school principals or high-level central office staff. Their feedback was included throughout this work. All documents related to this study were maintained in multiple electronic locations along with secured hard copies for review/audit. Electronic materials were password protected while hard copies were stored in a locked filing cabinet.

Benefits and Risks

This study presents great benefit to the area of educational leadership as well as to the participants themselves. Participants benefited by having the opportunity to share their experiences related to bullying along with their best-practice strategies that may impact the long-term development of preventative measures to address bullying in schools. While the benefits have the potential to be substantial, this study was not without potential risk. Through their shared experiences, it was reasonable to suspect that this issue could have elicited strong emotions and opinions from the participants. This did occur with two participants. All names of participants and sites have been substituted with pseudonyms. All other potentially identifiable data has been altered to protect the identity of the participants.

Limitations

This study contains two primary limitations. First, as mentioned earlier, my role as an administrator does create some bias. It was the intent of this study and the desire of

the researcher to find and highlight the way an administrator can positively influence the culture of bullying in his or her school. Secondly, this study included a relatively small sample size. As such, the nuances of each school play a significant role in the story each has to tell. The case study design of the study intended to look closely at exemplary practice and the results were intended to produce generalizations. There should be an understanding that issues related to bullying are complex and dynamic.

Summary

This qualitative study was designed to examine the ability of an administrator to positively impact the culture in a school as it relates to bullying. The case study approach allowed the researcher to examine three exemplar schools and their leaders. Through interviews of administrators and key staff members along with observations in each school, the researcher was able to gain an overall sense of the culture in each school and, more importantly, give voice to effective administrators and schools on the front lines of bully prevention.

Chapters IV and V of this study tell the stories of the three exemplar case study schools. The findings from each case study are presented as lessons learned along with implications for other school leaders. It is my hope that through this study, readers would glean best practices and learn valuable lessons from effective leaders and schools as they attempted to confront bullying in their own schools.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORIES OF THE SCHOOLS

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to a presentation of the data collected from the various participants in this study and the observations conducted at each of the three participating case study schools. Throughout the interviews and observations, I sought to answer the following four research questions:

1. How do a principal's attitudes and experiences affect how he or she perceives bullying?
2. How do principals of schools that have positive, anti-bullying cultures perceive their role with regard to the culture of bullying at the school site?
3. How do effective principals lead on the issue of bullying?
4. What components do effective principals deem necessary to build a comprehensive approach to school bullying?

Each question was designed to develop an understanding of how administrators approach the issue of bullying in their schools as well as to gain insight into their ability to positively impact the culture as it relates to bullying. There was an understanding from the beginning of this study that effective leaders can and do lead in different ways and at times for different reasons. I also sought to give voice to the administrators and school leaders on the front lines of bully prevention.

As mentioned in Chapter I of this study, bullying in schools has gained national attention over the last few years. During that time it has all too often been the administrator's voice that has been missing. This is even more troubling when we are shielded from the stories of successful schools and programs that are led by effective principals. As such, it was important throughout the data collection process to hear the stories and give voice to the leaders and their practice. Throughout this chapter, I will use many of the words of the principals and school leaders I interviewed to help them tell their stories and the stories of their schools.

Organization of the Data

As this study is a case study of three exemplar schools, it is important to gain an understanding of the settings for the study. This chapter will also use the words and practices of each leader at the three schools to tell the story of each school and how each approaches bullying. The chapter is divided into three main sections, each telling the story of a one school and how its principal impacts the culture of bullying. Each section will begin by providing a brief overview of the highlighted case study school. As part of the overview I will share general information about each school, but more importantly I attempt to establish an understanding of the uniqueness of each school and how those unique qualities influence and shape each school's approach to bullying prevention. Following the overview for each school the data collected are presented. The data for each school are organized around the four research questions and the themes that emerged for each. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the chapter.

The Schools

All three case study schools were selected from a large urban district in North Carolina. The school district serves over 70,000 students and employs over 10,000 people in 125 schools. The school district is extremely diverse with 117 languages and 95 countries represented among its students. Over 50% of the students in the district receive free or reduced lunch services. The district also offers 53 magnet and choice programs. All three of the case study schools are classified as magnet programs. This is important to point out as magnet status may provide some insight into the common vision and shared focus at each of the three schools. While this study centers on the principal's leadership, further examination of magnet status as a larger factor in bullying-prevention is recognized as a potential area of study.

The school district also has an Office of Character Development. This department played a critical role in this study by providing the necessary data to identify the case study schools. The department exists to provide leadership and support to schools in the district as they work to implement character development and combat harassment and discrimination within the district. Character development is one of the primary tenants of the school district's strategic plan. To support its efforts, the department focuses on three main components in its approach: character development, service learning, and civic education. The department's website brochure offers the following as a means of explaining its purpose and mission:

We recognize that teachers of the highest caliber, an engaging curriculum and even the most advanced technology are not enough to prepare our students for life outside the classroom. It also takes something else. We refer to this missing

piece as character development. While the details of this essential lesson are not outlined in any textbook, it will be reinforced by every teacher, at every grade level, in every school. The benefit of strong character cannot be measured by any test. Rather, it is demonstrated during those common instances when our students are given the opportunity to think for themselves. Simply put, character is about making the right choices. If we can emphasize it from the moment a child begins school, character development can equip students with the tools and motivation necessary to be the change they wish to see in the world.

The Office of Character Development guided the school district to the Character Education Partnership's 2013 National School District of Character award.

Donald Arthur Mattingly Elementary School

An overview. Mattingly Elementary School is an elementary school serving more than 400 students in pre-k through fifth grade. The schools has more than 40 teachers with many more assistants and support staff. There is a principal and one assistant principal that serve the school. Sixty-one percent of the school's students are from families below the poverty level, 11% of students are classified as exceptional children, and 4% of the school's students receive advanced learner services. In 2011-2012 65% of the school's students passed the state reading test, while 78% of students passed the state math test.

Mattingly's mission statement is simple, "Peace, Learn, Lead." It is important to note and to understand that Mattingly Elementary is a magnet school specializing in the Montessori Method of teaching. All lower school staff members are trained, or will be trained, in the Montessori Method. The Montessori Method is important to understand and is central to the school's approach to anti-bullying. The school's website details their approach using the Montessori Method:

The foundation of the Mattingly Elementary community can be found in its Mission Statement and in the goals and values of its family members.

Beauty, Grace, and Peace are buzzwords at Mattingly Montessori Magnet School. The environment is purposely prepared in a manner that invites children to learn. This “prepared environment” empowers children to take control of their own learning and behavior.

On entering each classroom, the beauty of plants and flowers, along with inviting materials, exude a “sense of order” imperative to the Montessori Method. Classrooms are called “Children’s Houses” because the Montessori classroom is an extension of the home. The “Children’s House” is a place where children learn social skills and how to live together with harmony as well as academic skills. Children are treated with respect and are given choices in activities and the place they would like to work. In return, they behave with dignity and self-respect. It is no surprise that this peaceful atmosphere of the “Children’s House” overwhelms the observer who may be looking through the “viewing window” in the hall.

Children learn through experimentation and exploration with hands on materials. Teachers provide authentic experiences in order to achieve conceptual understanding—gardens are planted and tended, real animals are observed, and experimentation is extensive. Many field trips are taken during the year so that children may see, feel, hear, and smell the “real things” they have been talking about in the classroom. Children schooled the Montessori way learn about the “whole world” in which they live as they study many cultures--their geographical locations, their way of dress, and their lifestyles. Phonemic Awareness (the connection between letters and sounds) is strongly emphasized. Hands-on, specially designed Montessori materials are used to learn math concepts, which reach much higher levels of understanding than simple computation. Music, art, and physical fitness are not left out of the Montessori curriculum.

The website also welcomes all visitors to the school and notes that the school is an International Peace Site.

The principal. Mrs. Stengel serves as the principal at Mattingly Elementary.

She has been in education over 21 years, serving as both an elementary and middle school teacher. After serving as an assistant principal for 2 years, she became the principal at Mattingly. When she was appointed as principal, the school was going

through a particularly difficult period of time. A transition in the way magnet students were identified for the school along with a general perception of poor leadership had led to distrust in the school and a sense of chaos. Mrs. Stengel has been at the school for eight years now and has provided a much needed sense of stability. In her fourth year at the school, Mrs. Stengel was named the school district's elementary and overall Principal of the Year. When asked what her favorite part of being a principal was, she responded:

I think interacting with the children. I think if you're a teacher it always takes you back to your roots as a teacher. And I enjoy going in the classrooms and actually interacting with the students the most and sometimes I find myself teaching again. I enjoy going in and teaching a lesson with the kids or listening to them read or helping them with their work, that's the best part. (Mrs. Stengel)

Attitudes, perceptions, and influences related to bullying. It is important to understand that leadership is the sum product of an individual's experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and influences. Each person has clear and distinct experiences and thoughts that drive his or her ideas and actions as they pertain to bullying. As I talked with the principal and leaders at Mattingly Elementary, I asked them to share their thoughts on what bullying is as well as their professional and personal experiences with bullying. I also asked them about their general opinions of bullying.

Understanding how school personnel define bullying provides insight into the seriousness and urgency with which they approach it. When defining bullying, each of the participants had very distinct thoughts about what bullying actually is; yet there was clarity and singularity within each definition. Mrs. Stengel pointed out "that there are some behaviors that are developmental. It crosses the line over into bullying when it's

targeted at a specific student or it's persistently, consistently happening." All three of the other school leaders at Mattingly shared that sentiment, emphasizing that bullying was behavior that was continual or persistent. Ms. Mantle, the school's guidance counselor, defined bullying as

students that are being constantly harassed, whether it's verbally, whether it's physically, just a constant harassment that is annoying to the child, that is making them feel intimidated, that is frightening the child, making them afraid to come to school or be around certain people.

Mrs. Berra and Mrs. Dimaggio, two of the schools teachers, added that bullying is behavior that is one sided. "Bullying is when there is an aggressor but the other person doesn't respond and they feel like they can't respond because they're intimidated by the other person and it's constant and it really affects their personality. It's deliberate" (Mrs. Berra).

Personal definitions are often derived from one's experiences. As I talked with each of the participants at Mattingly, I began to hear their how their personal and professional experiences with bullying shaped their definitions and opinions about the issue. Mrs. Stengel recalled that she believes that all folks have had some experience with bullying. The key is that how we view bullying has changed over time. When asked to share her personal experiences with bullying she responded with the following:

I think based on today's definition of bullying, probably we all have, but I don't think it was as prevalent or it was not on the forefront of a problem to be solved when I was growing up. I went to [a local high school], which was predominantly white middle class and I think [that school] was bussed then, so I was probably part of that bussing situation and though I experienced some racial issues but not consistent, persistent taunting. There was name calling, there was probably some

intimidation, but I don't know if it would be defined as bullying back then the way it is now. It was typical things that I had to work through and solve myself or with little interventions from the teacher. (Mrs. Stengel)

When reflecting on her professional experiences with bullying, Mrs. Stengel expressed concern over the difficulty in helping people understand what bullying actually is. "Not all situations are bullying situations. It is a throw word now days and everyone wants to define every situation as bullying. So I think that the hardest part is getting everyone on the same page" (Mrs. Stengel). As expected, her personal and professional experiences with bullying seemed to shape her opinions of bullying. Asked about her general opinion of bullying, the principal stated:

I think it's situations where people's ideas and morals and values cross some very blurred lines because what I may look at as bullying may not be bullying to someone else, that may be their form of life in their home, you know, tapping people or calling a name may just be what we do in our house and it may not be perceived as being bullying where in another family, simply saying the word silly or stupid may be considered bullying . . . bullying can be perceived in different situations, differently by different people. (Mrs. Stengel)

While not a victim of bullying personally, Mrs. Dimaggio's experiences with bullying were similarly critical in shaping her opinions of bullying. As a child, she recalled how her brother, who suffered from social anxiety, struggled to fit in at school and how that not only affected him, but their entire family.

My brother had social anxiety. And I watched him, he was a year younger than me, and I watched him struggle through high school and ended up dropping out of high school. He went to go get his GED and the lady was just like I can't believe you- you could be like a doctor. I mean, he's very bright, but just that social anxiety and being very introverted it was very hard to watch, because I was a teenager myself going through being a teenager, you know, who is very close to

her brother so that . . . is why that was eye opening for me because it affected me so much that I realized that wow, that really did affect me back in high school. . . . I think it has made me a much more empathetic person just overall. I'm very quick to instead of just lash out at the child help the child solve a problem—try to help the child problem solve and figure out well why did that happen. (Mrs. Dimaggio)

She also described an incident in her pre-K classroom where one of her students had an older brother that was the victim of bullying. The child came to her expressing his concern for his brother. She said, “I definitely took away that not only the victim and the perpetrator are affected but also family members are affected by it too” (Mrs. Dimaggio).

As she shared her experiences with bullying, Mrs. Dimaggio began to talk about her opinions of the issue. As was heard many times throughout my interviews at each of the schools, she shared her sense of seriousness over bullying while expressing concern that the term bullying is often overused and thus creates confusion over the definition and approach to bullying.

Mrs. Berra and Ms. Mantle both shared personal and professional experiences with bullying. Mrs. Berra, a third-grade teacher, recalled an instance in which a girl singled her out and how she was expected to handle it. Her experience opened a window into her opinions as well as her approach to bullying.

I had a girl in high school who just picked me out of class that she was not going to like and was rude to me in hallways and things and when I finally stood up to her she let me alone. But the times when I was just, you know, I'm gonna ignore her, that didn't work. . . . It took me some time and a lot of courage to kinda come out of my body to do that. Yeah, it was definitely not in my personality. . . . I think with the right coaching they need to understand the mentality of their bully and understand that once you stand up . . . all of those life skills that the kids are learning through the bullying workshops, once they learn that skillset, I think they

will have more tools to deal with it because the old, and I find myself as a parent saying, that's ok, just ignore them, that's not good enough. (Mrs. Berra)

Mrs. Berra went on to share how concerning it is to hear of all the bullying reports on the news coupled with reports of children committing suicide. "That's just heartbreaking to me that they can't go through life living peacefully and they're having to be scared to go to school and that's one of my main goals, the school needs to be safe" (Mrs. Berra).

Ms. Mantle, the school's guidance counselor, also reiterates that she knows what it is like to come to school afraid and that no child should have to do that. She shared that in her experience, it is often the same child who perpetrates the bullying and that in her work as a counselor she can often spot those children at an early age. That is why she responds immediately to any reports of bullying.

Perceptions of the role of the principal. This study is designed to understand the positive impact the principal can have on the culture of bullying in a school. As part of the study, it is important to understand the perceptions of the role the principal plays with regard to bullying in his or her school. I asked each participant about his or her overall assessment of bullying at his or her school as well as the attitudes and perceptions that exist about bullying from the various stakeholders. I also asked them to identify any factors that may shape those attitudes and perceptions. Additionally, I asked each participant, including the principal, what influence the principal has over shaping the existing attitudes and perceptions as well as what responsibility the principal has to actually shape them.

As the participants at Mattingly Elementary talked about their assessment of bullying at their school, the one reoccurring theme was the opinion that incidents of bullying are rare at Mattingly. The Montessori curriculum was at the center of each assessment as well. Ms. Mantle, the school's guidance counselor, also focused on the policies at Mattingly, such as the peace curriculum and the Talk-Tell-Take program, and how they influence the culture in the school:

I think that Mattingly has a really wonderful policy, on having what we call a peace table, because it is a Montessori school and it is based on peace. So, the students learn right off the bat that if you're having a disagreement or a dispute with another child to go to the peace table and try to talk it out with that child. We want the children to try to work out on their own but we have this talk, tell, and take. The talk, tell, and take that we're using I think is a wonderful philosophy for children to learn and so if they say that they're having a problem with another child with bullying, first we talk about it. (Ms. Mantle)

Mrs. Berra, a third grade teacher, also focused on the peace aspect of the Montessori program in her assessment of the culture of bullying at Mattingly:

You have some kids who I think have the potential to become a bully full force, but in here there's a lot of supervision, there's a lot of community building and the peace curriculum is emphasized and especially with teachers who went through Montessori training. A huge part of our training is the peace curriculum, teaching them about being peacemakers, teaching them who peacemakers are and kind of instilling that through the curriculum. And the community building just helps when you have love for your classmates. You don't have the need to bully them. And the volunteering and the community service, all of that I think helps build our character, so the need to bully is less. (Mrs. Berra)

Mrs. Dimaggio, a pre-K teacher at Mattingly, emphasized the peace curriculum in the Montessori program as well in her assessment. As she shared her assessment, she

spoke to some of the specifics of the peace curriculum and how it impacts bullying on a larger scale in the school:

One of the things I think that really helps our school is the fact that we try very hard. We have what's called the peace area and we have some type of object either a peace rose or a peace rock. All the tattling and stuff like that we always send them to go talk it out and then taught whoever's holding the rose is the one who speaks, and they have to use nice words to each other. And so a lot of our things are solved just by the children actively trying to problem solve on how can we make this better, preventing it from getting to a higher degree. (Mrs. Dimaggio)

In addition to a general assessment of bullying at Mattingly Elementary, I asked each participant to give an overall assessment of the culture as it relates to bullying at the school. Mrs. Stengel commented on the peaceful and respectful feeling in the school:

When everybody walks in this school everybody says the same thing, whether we have kids here or not, that the school just seems so peaceful. And it is, it is a very peaceful place, even with some behaviors that are inappropriate from children, we still try to handle everything in a very peaceful manner. It's just my expectation that teachers talk to kids with respect and kids talk to each other with respect. If you come to the school most of the time we recognize kids with the word friend, we call everybody a friend. The teachers will speak with them in a very positive manner by saying, "Friend, can you stand in line?" or "Friend, can you?", because we want it to be a friendly environment so we recognize kids as friends. We talk to the kids about what it means to be a friend. So we deal with bullying, negative behaviors still with a very positive connotation. When we deal with behaviors we talk about positive things, we say lots of peacemaker things, "What do peacemakers do, do you know what a peacemaker is?" "How would a peacemaker handle this situation, were you being a peacemaker?" So we talk a lot about peace and we just use positive language all the time. (Mrs. Stengel)

Ms. Mantle's comments echoed those of the principal:

I have to say that this is one of the calmest schools that I've been in. Very calm, I mean, disputes, if there are any, are pretty much handled in the classroom with the

peace table with students talking amongst themselves, getting it out, with the teachers being very proactive. . . . I think everybody here is on one page, wanting everything to run very smoothly and as I even said when we first talked, everybody here assists everybody no matter what you need to do. If a student, like the little ones, because they are so little and they're learning, if they're having behavior problems, another teacher is willing to let that student come in and have a little time out in their room and it's not frowned upon. So we all help each other so well at this school and we very seldom have any type of big bullying episodes. The climate here really is a very warm, nurturing climate. (Ms. Mantle)

Mrs. Dimaggio talked about how the principal's emphasis on acceptance and community building impact the culture:

I think that parents really appreciate that, especially the parents of the community, the neighborhood around the school, just to know that we accept them and that we want them here just as much as we want our magnet kids here. And I think that it's also, it's just effective to build that peace and love of getting all of our families together and walking and doing it in harmony and peace. It's the peace parade. And also recognizing different cultures within the world, as we're studying, because we not only make the parade, we actually study the countries. And I think that that builds diversity of understanding for children. (Mrs. Dimaggio)

The participants also shared their thoughts on the attitudes and perceptions that exist about bullying at Mattingly. Again, a common theme for the participants is that stakeholders do not see bullying as a very big issue at the school. While some parents are hypersensitive to issues of bullying and there is some personal bias on the part of teachers, the school is seen as safe and parents, students, and teachers clearly understand the expectations for the school. Mrs. Stengel commented on her approach to parent perceptions and how the school has worked to improve them:

I had to understand what parents' perception of the school was at first, so what I did was a survey. . . . I did some questions and one of them was, of course, the

parent community involvement piece, and I centered a lot of the questions around safety in the school and bullying. So I wanted to get some type of understanding of what the community's perception was of the school, because I didn't want to jump to a conclusion and say, we have a bullying problem. And really, families are not looking at it like that, so when I did the survey I did see where most people felt that their children were safe here and that this is a good place where kids come and learn but there were isolated situations where parents perceived as being bullying, like bus situations, but they connected it to the school. So once I got that data back, I just compiled some areas where I thought that we needed to target to change parents' perceptions because a lot of it was misperceived and so we really worked on that with my leadership team. Little things like respect just not being respectful was considered sometimes a bullying situation, so once we got a clear understanding of parents' perceptions and understandings and definitions of bullying we got together and got a plan, how can we change their perception, because if we change their perceptions we change their minds. (Mrs. Stengel)

Mrs. Stengel went on to talk about the community perceptions of the school and how those perceptions have changed over time:

The first goal when I became principal here was to change the perception of Mattingly in the community. Because when I got here it had a very negative connotation with the name Mattingly Elementary because people would say, oh that school has police over there. That's a terrible school and it just didn't open with good support from the community, because of the way it opened, with neighborhood—half the school being neighborhood and half being magnet. It was just not a very positive way to start a school, so I had to come in and change the whole perception of Mattingly and that's taken many years. . . . And I think once we did that and we began to build positive relationships in the community then it kind of changed, matriculated over into the school too. We stopped saying neighborhood and magnet. It's just Montessori, our Montessori kids, so that was my vision was to change the perception of the school inside and outside. (Mrs. Stengel)

When Ms. Mantle talked about the attitudes and perceptions that existed in the school community, she noted that students in particular know what to do if there is a problem, and that improves the perceptions of everyone:

I think that they realize we don't really have a very huge problem of bullying here, but I think that they know that it is going to be handled. Teachers usually are the first point of contact, the student will tell the teacher because that's the first person that they see and if it becomes, the teacher usually talks to them, handles it pretty well, but if they see that it is becoming a recurrent problem then they will contact me to get the student and then I talk with them and we handle it ourselves, and it's usually over . . . So, pretty much I think from the top down, we're all on board with making sure that these students know that there's not going to be bullying tolerated here. (Ms. Mantle)

Mrs. Dimaggio and Mrs. Berra, both classroom teachers at Mattingly, commented that the perception of the school has improved over time. They both still struggle with how parents often define bullying, but point out that even though parents may be more liberal in their definitions of bullying, they do not see bullying as a major problem and that the school has a good handle on the issue.

When asked what factors she believed shaped the existing attitudes and perceptions about bullying, Mrs. Stengel talked about how society shapes the way people view others and issues. She commented, "Teachers come with a background . . . they come with values of their own. I think society shapes how we view kids and it's very hard to come in and not bring that background with you." She went on to share how those views could cause teachers in particular to pre-judge students. Mrs. Dimaggio also alluded to changes in society when talking about factors shaping the attitudes and perceptions surrounding bullying at the school. She expressed concern that the breakdown of the family and materialistic nature of society in general is changing the way students interact with one another and in turn is impacting the way they see their school.

Ms. Mantle spoke to the leadership of the principal when offering her thoughts on factors shaping attitudes and perceptions about bullying in the school:

I think it starts from the top down because our principal, she definitely has a very low tolerance on bullying. And she's talked about it from the beginning of the year, at the very beginning of the year, that we're not going to have bullying, so it starts with her and students know that if they are being bullied that they can come to her because she's let them know that. (Ms. Mantle)

Mrs. Berra offered a little perspective as to what factors she believes causes parents to seem to be more sensitive to issues of bullying:

I think it's because it's such a focus now and we're hearing it constantly in the news and its scaring parents. If your son came home crying and telling you that someone put a "kick me" sticker on your back, you, as a parent you're thinking, oh my gosh, he's being tormented at school, I want him to be safe and when you hear of kids committing suicide because of bullying, as a parent I can see going to the extreme because we know what the extreme looks like for the victim. (Mrs. Berra)

After speaking to the attitudes and perceptions that exist in the school community about bullying, I asked each participant to talk about how the principal can or does influence those attitudes and perceptions. Mrs. Stengel said that she absolutely influences perceptions at Mattingly and talked about her variety of experiences both as a teacher and as an administrator that allow her to have influence. She says that her cumulative experiences make her a better principal. Mrs. Mantle also said that Mrs. Stengel "definitely" influences attitudes and perceptions because she is the leader and she "sets the atmosphere." Mrs. Dimaggio added that one of the primary ways Mrs. Stengel exerts her influence is in her emphasis on educating parents, in particular with issues

related to bullying. She also added that she influences culture by making the school a welcoming place and emphasizing the school's peace curriculum:

I do feel that she has helped to shape that culture to making it a more welcoming place where children and families feel safe. I can tell you I really loved my first principal that was here when I came, but wasn't as effective in enforcing, making sure teachers were following through with the conflict resolution stuff, and if you are not leading by example, people are not going to do it and then the program becomes less effective. (Mrs. Dimaggio)

As we talked about the principal's responsibility to influence and shape attitudes and perceptions about bullying, the participants at Mattingly talked about the principal's responsibility to lead. Mrs. Stengel talked about her responsibility to shape perception by thinking ahead to what she wants the perceptions to be. She shared, "Just being a visionary leader. . . . I know what I want the end to look like."

Ms. Mantle and Mrs. Dimaggio both commented that stakeholders should hear from the principal first on the topic of bullying. She should and does set the tone. Ms. Mantle stated, "I expect the principal to be the first person to address it." About the principal's role, Mrs. Dimaggio added, "I think it is a pretty important one because they are the leader, the role model, the leader of the school."

Principal leadership. The crux of this study was to examine the principal's leadership on the issue of bullying. To gain insight into this I asked participants how the principal approached the issue of bullying at the school. As part of this question, I sought to understand when and how the principal talked about bullying. I wanted to know what specific language he or she used when talking about bullying. I also wanted to find out what protocols and procedures the principal put in place to address bullying once it was

identified. It was also important to ask and understand what successes and challenges the school had experienced with regard to bullying.

Mrs. Stengel's approach to bullying is comprehensive. She begins by setting clear expectations for teachers and ensuring that all staff has a common understanding of what bullying is and what are the protocols and procedures. She uses her clarity to hold teachers accountable throughout the year as situations, bullying or otherwise, arise. Mrs. Stengel also relies heavily on the theme at Mattingly as well as the policies she has in place to address bullying at the classroom level:

It has to start in the classroom. We have a bullying policy that we teach the kids and it's called our Three T Step to Bullying, and it's Talk, Tell, Take. Did you talk to the person, so the students are taught, you talk to the person by saying, I don't like it when you do that, can you please not do that. So we teach them how to have those conversations instead of being impulsive—you know, you stepped on my shoe, I'm going to push you or hit you back, by saying, can you please not step on my shoe again? So we teach students how to have conversations and then the, Tell. If it's persistent or it happens more often than it should after you've talked to the person or you've taken them to the peace table, we teach them how to say in a strong voice, if you don't stop I will tell, so giving that person a warning that the next step is me going to an adult. And then the last step is take, take it to an adult, take it to your parent, teacher, or principal. So Talk, Tell, Take. (Mrs. Stengel)

In addition, Mrs. Stengel endeavors to address and change perceptions with parents as well as staff as part of her approach. With parents, she uses safety surveys to understand perceptions. She then uses that information to develop and apply targeted strategies to address those perceptions. For the staff at Mattingly, Mrs. Stengel engaged in a series of activities targeting teacher bias. These activities were designed to help teachers develop a better understanding of their students.

Mrs. Dimaggio also talked about Mrs. Stengel's procedural approach as well as her positive approach to bullying. As part of her approach, she has raised awareness to the issue. To accomplish this she has used signage throughout the building in addition to establishing the expectation that all adults are expected to intervene when students are experiencing a problem.

Mrs. Stengel also exhibits a genuine care for the students at Mattingly. Ms. Mantle stated that this is obvious and as a result, Mrs. Stengel is open to any suggestion that is pro-student. Ms. Mantle also pointed out that her principal clearly communicates her expectations about bullying and expects staff to be proactive where bullying is concerned.

Talk is an essential element to Mrs. Stengel's approach to bullying. She covers bullying with parents at PTA meetings and through automated phone calls, with staff during faculty meetings and PLC meetings, and with students in school wide assemblies and individually as each incident occurs. When she talks about bullying, Mrs. Stengel is direct. She emphasizes procedures and what bullying is and is not. She expresses a no tolerance approach while emphasizing good character. Ms. Mantle talked about a typical conversation she has with students:

She says "students; we are going to look after each other. We are not going to tolerate it." She says to bullies; "We're not going to tolerate bullying. If you feel like you are being bullied, you need to let an adult know, that's what we're here for. Let your teachers know, let your counselor know." And she says, "You can come to me." She's told the students, so they know that, students know that she's the type of person that is very, very warm and not a cold person. She's looking out for them. So she's told them in numerous times that she is available for them, but that we're not going to tolerate it. (Ms. Mantle)

When bullying does happen at Mattingly, teachers are expected to follow a clear set of protocols for addressing it. Because of the Montessori program at the school and the supplemental peace curriculum, students are expected to attempt to resolve their own conflicts before involving adults. This is done through the aforementioned peace curriculum and the Talk, Tell, Take program. Students are taught these protocols beginning in pre-kindergarten classes. Mrs. Stengel supports this methodology in her dealings with students by using the peace table in her office as well to resolve student conflicts that come to her. In extreme cases or situations where students are unable work through their conflict for one reason or another, adults are expected to act. That expectation exists for all adults in the building. Outside intervention usually begins with the school's guidance counselor and if necessary, the school's principal. In those cases, the school district bullying form is filled out, parents are involved, and consequences are issued if warranted.

As the participants commented on Mrs. Stengel's approach and leadership in the area of bullying, they talked about many of the successes Mattingly has experienced in the area of bullying. Mrs. Stengel talked specifically about the decrease in incidents of bullying over time:

I think less work on our part and decreased suspensions. I think it's more, when I have to suspend, it's more serious individual behaviors versus bullying situations. Really I've seen the bullying situations be resolved more quickly than they have in the past. We've gradually gotten to the point where the kids can resolve the issues before it gets to a parent conference or a suspension, so I've seen an increase in the students, and I think it has continued from kindergarten. I see the fifth graders; I have less older kids coming in my office with conflict, peer conflicts, than I do the younger kids. So I think the training transfers throughout their experience at the elementary school. (Mrs. Stengel)

As Mrs. Berra talked about Mattingly's successes, she focused on the collaborative nature of the school's approach:

I think that the community building is huge here and the collaboration between the staff. IST (Intervention and Support Team) has been a very big help with, even though it's academics, the behavior part. In IST we come up with really good strategies of how to build up the bully, maybe he needs to volunteer with a kindergarten student and read to them, do things to build up their self-esteem. Because usually the few bullying situations that we had that were extreme, there were some self-esteem issues with the person so we were trying to come up with ways to help build their self-esteem and collaborating with different teachers and trying to come up with strategies to do that has been helpful. And the custodians here are amazing. They really will work with the students. The bullies that we've had, they check on them every day. They go in the cafeteria and they talk to them, how was your day, keeping it together. We have some, two really awesome custodians that really talk to the—and it's mostly been boys, black males, have really talked with them and helped them make better choices. (Mrs. Berra)

Even though there are many successes, Mattingly does still experience some challenges related to bullying. Mrs. Stengel talked about the difficulty of getting parents to trust the process in place at the school:

The biggest challenge is that everybody wants to define every situation as bullying, that's the biggest challenge. And helping the parents understand that you don't always have to intervene, that kids can problem solve. Because a lot of time the parents want just me to come in and fix it. (Mrs. Stengel)

There are also factors outside the school's control, such as television, media, and music as well as neighborhood or home issues, which create challenges for the staff at Mattingly. Mattingly's magnet situation, with some students being magnet and some being neighborhood, also creates challenges as the experience can vary for the different

populations of students. In general, these challenges have not kept the school from developing a comprehensive and effective approach to bullying.

Table 4 lists the actions or attitudes on the part of Mrs. Stengel that contribute to the overall anti-bullying culture at Mattingly. The attitudes and actions referenced in the table reflect the statements of the participants during the interview portion of the data collection process. The table notes the source along with the data. It provides a valuable visual picture of the perception of the principal's influence of the anti-bullying culture by both the principal herself as well as the staff leaders at the school. In general, the principal and the school leaders are in agreement about the principal's approach to bullying at the school.

Table 4

Principal's Approach to Bullying: Actions or Attitudes that Contribute to Anti-Bullying Culture at Mattingly Elementary School by Source

Action or Attitude	Principal	School Leaders
Leads by example		X
Seeks to understand perceptions	X	
Develops targeted strategies based on data	X	
Open/routine communication about bullying and expectations	X	X
Emphasizes adult reporting and intervention	X	
Has high expectations for teachers and students	X	X
Uses positive approaches to bullying	X	X
Displays a genuine care for students		X
Emphasizes respect for students and staff	X	

Table 4

(Cont.)

Action or Attitude	Principal	School Leaders
Believes in student empowerment	X	
Establishes clear protocols and procedures	X	X

Components of the school's program. The components of a school's bullying program provide the cornerstone of the principal's leadership and impact on the school in the area of bully prevention. I asked each participant to share what they believe have been the keys to their school's success in bully prevention as well as the most critical components to their school's program. The participants were asked to begin with a brief overview of any professional development they had received personally or as a staff to help them understand or address bullying.

Whole staff training specifically designed for bullying at Mattingly has been limited primarily to a beginning of the year training provided by the school's guidance counselor. During this training, staff received information on identifying and recognizing bullying, expectations about the school's approach to bullying, and the procedures and protocols for addressing bullying once it occurs. The staff has also done a great deal of work with the peace curriculum component of the Montessori training. This training specifically helps teachers as they work to help students address conflict. Mrs. Stengel also pointed out that the staff has participated on some diversity training offered by the school district that she believes directly impacts their ability to deal with conflict and

issues related to bullying. The participants highlighted a variety of other individual trainings such as working with poverty and addressing racism as indirectly assisting them as they understand and address issues related to bullying.

Mattingly Elementary has many reasons to be proud. This was profoundly on display as each of the participants shared the school's keys to success. Each participant shared a range elements, each of which are best shared in their own words.

Mrs. Stengel talked about the overall feel in the building:

We teach how to be peaceful, how to work in a community setting. The Montessori is built on living together peacefully in a community. So the bullying kind of coincides with the philosophy of Montessori, how do you get along with people that have differences, and how do you build a sense of harmony and peace in an environment with people that are different from you. . . . Very peaceful, we try to make our environment very peaceful, even when you walk into the classrooms, it has a very homey environment. We try to make it feel peaceful. I even send out Connect Ed's, I let parents know when we do lock down drills, and if we've had a practice drill, and what does that entail. So I go out of my way to try to make parents feel safe, that this is a safe environment. We have a sign up front that says you have to stop in the office. So I think parents feel comfortable here and I try to be visible and know my parents and have relationships, and they feel very comfortable coming to me and talking to me, so, I think just, again, changing the perceptions. When people feel, it's almost like when your house just smells good it looks clean. So you light candles, when you have the look and feel of safety I think parents buy into this is a safe school. And I feel comfortable that my child attends here, even if there are conflicts, they feel comfortable that there's something in place to address a conflict. . . . I think the main thing is building a relationship of trust with your teachers. As a principal, I have to make sure that under that umbrella, that I'm covering every base, so I have to make sure that I have positive relationships with my teachers, with my students, and with my families, it's all three of those entities trust me as the leader. (Mrs. Stengel)

Mrs. Stengel also mentioned the visuals in the building highlighting anti-bullying and peace, the school's peace parade, and examining personal biases with the staff as keys to the school's success.

Ms. Mantle also talked about philosophy and family in her response:

I think it starts, first of all, with the type of school that this is. With it being a Montessori school. The children are able to learn at their own pace and I think that's been very helpful. And so they're learning how to get along with others at a very young age because peace is just stressed here—have a peaceful day, be peaceful, things that you just don't hear in some other schools. I think that's the backbone . . . along with having people that are very much in tune with the program. Our principal, our administrators, our faculty—I think that you've got people here that love the philosophy. Another good factor is that they usually stay at this school from pre-k on up. So they pretty much know each other. It is like a family. We have a lot of classes that are two grades. You've got the Pre-K and the K. So whoever you had with Pre-K, you're going to have it with Kindergarten and you pretty much will have the same teacher unless someone moves. We also have autistic classes here. So sometimes the autistic children, due to their disability, they may be loud, they may cry out, they may make all kind of noises that you may not hear from some of the other students, but the students have embraced that, they don't laugh, they don't pick at these students, they understand that they have a disability. So I think that just the structure has been a wonderful way for these children to grow and develop into being caring students. (Ms. Mantle)

Mrs. Dimaggio talked about clear communication as well as strong support from the school's parents as keys to addressing bullying at Mattingly. She also commented on Mrs. Stengel's leadership in building community. She highlighted the peace parade is a key part of connecting the school to the broader community:

We do the peace parade every year. Every single classroom selects the country and we make big large flags and other things. We actually had third graders do Japan every year and so they dress in kimonos and the hats and everything and so it's really cool. We start over in the neighborhood because we definitely want to build the community. We start on Brentwood [Street] and we usually have a band, and we just walk a peace parade back to our Family Fun Day. It's a good community builder. I think that parents really appreciate that, especially the parents of the community, the neighborhood down the school, just to know that we accept them and that we want them here just as much as we want our magnet kids here. And I think that it's just effective to build that peace and love of getting all of our families together and walking and doing it in harmony and

peace. Also recognizing different cultures within the world, as we're studying, because we not only make the parade, we actually study the countries. I think that that builds diversity of understanding the diversity for children. (Mrs. Dimaggio)

Mrs. Berra also talked extensively about the Montessori program and the peace curriculum as keys Mattingly's success. In addition, she talked about the "all-in" mentality of the staff at the school. She commented, "I say it's from top to bottom, from the custodians to the cafeteria to the principals, specialists, everybody gets involved and that's been a push from Mrs. Stengel, we are all in."

As the participants talked about the most critical components of Mattingly's program, the most common references included the programs they had in place at the school, in particular the peace curriculum component of the Montessori program. The Talk, Tell, Take program, designed specifically for bullying, is also a critical component in school's program. The additional components at Mattingly reflect the general approach that the school and the principal have taken. Community building and teacher support for one another as well as teacher empowerment are components that set the tone at the school. The use of the school district bully reporting form has also allowed the school to gain a clearer picture of incidents as they happen. Those pieces along with clear communication about the issue, often done through classroom guidance lessons, allow the school to address bullying in a comprehensive and direct manner. At Mattingly all stakeholders, including students, share the responsibility for addressing bullying and are held equally accountable.

School visits. Throughout my research, I had several opportunities to visit Mattingly. Each time I visited the school, I took occasions to speak with staff members

and watch the interactions of students and staff as they interacted with one another. I looked for visual cues that supported the data that led to the identification of the school as a case study school. I also noted the culture of the school as I tried to gain a sense of the school's identity, especially as it related to anti-bullying efforts. In addition to the many visits I made to conduct interviews and get to know the school, I made two visits for the sole purpose of formally observing the school in action. During these visits, I observed the students and staff as they interacted in non-classroom common area settings. I used an observation guide (Appendix C) to note interactions among students and staff. The observation guided is detailed in Chapter III.

Mattingly's school facility is a terrific visual representation of the Montessori theme and accompanying peace curriculum. With every visit, I noted new visual representations of the theme that I had not noticed previously. The school was full of anti-bullying signage. Stop signs with the words bullying and a cross through it as well as signs with Talk-Tell-Take, the procedure for addressing bullying at the school if you are a victim, were in the office, hallways, and classrooms. The office had artwork depicting various anti-bullying themes. There were even pictures of peaceful scenes such as unicorns walking in beautiful pastures throughout the building. The staff was constantly observed interacting with students and providing positive reinforcement and encouragement.

During my first formal observation at Mattingly, I observed in the cafeteria and watched as the school delivered the routine lunch service. As students entered the cafeteria, I first noted that everything that happened was procedural and orderly.

Students entered, moved through the line, and went to their assigned tables. Teachers monitored each class, standing and assisting students as needed. Teachers stood throughout the lunch service. As students ate, they talked quietly with one another and limited their conversations to the students directly around them. Teachers interacted almost exclusively with students. Only one teacher did not fit this mold, as she wandered around the cafeteria talking with various other teachers. Those teachers seemed somewhat uncomfortable and disengaged with her and reengaged with their students. As teachers and staff interacted with students, they were respectful and polite. There was constant positive reinforcement for students as teachers issued specific praise for appropriate behaviors. Students also addressed teachers and staff respectfully. They returned the positive reinforcement they received with smiles. As I looked for specific protocols related to bullying and bullying prevention, I noted that teachers constantly monitored students. They strategically interacted with students, building relationships and emphasizing routine. Prevention appeared to be the key to bullying prevention in this setting.

The second formal observation was completed during recess at Mattingly. Mattingly has several areas for students to play during recess. During the recess hour, I moved around to the various areas. I had the privilege of speaking with several teachers as I observed. During this time, students played basketball and football, played on playground equipment, while others sat and talked with one another. As students played, the teachers were engaged in active supervision. They talked with students as they played and occasionally even played games with the students. Students played well with

one another. They played and talked and interacted respectfully with each other. In one instance, a fifth grade student had fallen down. Several students stopped to help him up. Similar to the lunch service, teachers had very limited interactions with one another. They focused the vast majority of their attention on their students. As they interacted with their students, they were helpful and friendly. Each teacher moved to groups of students if anything seemed out of the ordinary. Students appeared to be respectful and trusting of their teachers. Like the lunch service, high levels of monitoring along with active involvement with students were key protocols in bullying prevention.

The teacher and staff interactions in both settings were consistent with the information shared during interviews. Teachers and staff members were procedural, highly visible, and proactive. They were consistently in the process of monitoring students while at the same time taking opportunities to build relationships with them. Teachers and students alike seemed to understand and follow expectations. As all of the participants stated, a community atmosphere was evident during my observations.

George Herman Ruth Middle School

An overview. Ruth Middle School is a traditional middle school serving students in grades six through eight. Over 870 students attend the school with better than 60 teachers along with additional staff serving those students. There is one principal and three assistant principals at the school. Ruth is a diverse middle school with 41% African American students, 29% white students, 16% Hispanic students, 10% Asian students, and 4% from various other subgroups. Seventy-five percent of the school's students receive free or reduced lunch services. The mission statement from the school website states

“We, the staff of Ruth Middle School, are committed to providing a safe, professional learning environment for students. As a result, our students will become responsible, productive citizens in a diverse world.”

Ruth Middle School also serves as one of the district’s magnet programs as an International Baccalaureate World School. The school’s website describes their program and its effects on the school:

Ruth Middle School is an International Baccalaureate MYP (Middle Years Programme) candidate school and recipient of the 2007 Magnet Schools Assistance Program federal funding. Since becoming a new magnet school in 2007, Ruth Middle has re-energized its zoned population to return from private schools as well as offer placements for 50 magnet out of zone students selected by randomized lottery. Due to the hard work of staff and students, Ruth became an IB candidate school in 18 months. Building upon the success of the new magnet curriculum, Ruth’s students made AYP for the very first time in 2008. Diversity of ideas is celebrated at Ruth Middle as emphasized in the International Baccalaureate mission statement, which states, “Others with their differences can also be right.” Students at Ruth celebrate diversity among cultures by identifying the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile Characteristics in themselves and others. Students are involved in rigorous concept based instruction as they engage in eight content areas (English Language Arts, Spanish or Chinese, Humanities, Sciences, Math, Arts, Physical Education and Technology) that are intertwined through five distinct areas of interaction. These areas of interaction include how students approach learning, how human ingenuity factors into creativity, how participating in one’s community and the world fosters positive change, how environment is linked to all content, and how health and social education play an important role in today’s world.

As part of the framework for Ruth Middle’s approach to discipline, the school uses the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program. The program is designed to provide positive supports and interventions to assist with common area behaviors. The school’s PBIS Student Motto says that students will:

- Focus on being respectful and responsible by
- Making positive decisions while
- Striving for excellence!

Ruth Middle School has a long and rich history. The modern era for the school began when the school moved into its current building in 1931. Not only did the school move into a new building at a new location, the school also changed its name to George Herman Ruth Junior High School- a name that the school would maintain until it shifted to the middle school concept in the 1980's and became George Herman Ruth Middle School. The school has traditionally served both the wealthiest and the poorest neighborhoods in the city it serves. The school's poorest students come from two federal housing projects. Over time, the wealthier families began to leave the school for private school options. By the late 1990's, the school culture had shifted. As a result, low test scores, discipline problems, and poor community perception plagued the school. Prior to the current principal's arrival, there had been principal instability and high turnover. The introduction of the magnet theme along with a targeted effort to bring the lost private school students back to the school resulted in some shift in the school's demographics and perceptions. The school is still working to continue to shift the culture at the school and attract more lost students back to the school.

The principal. Mrs. Rizzuto is in her fourth year as principal of Ruth Middle School. She has served a total of eight years as a principal and an additional six as an assistant principal. Prior to her work in administration, she taught science for several years. All of her experience prior to arriving at Ruth Middle School was outside the state

of North Carolina. All of her experience has been in urban school settings. When she arrived at Ruth, she was the sixth principal in seven years. The school was coming through a particularly difficult period where it had become perceived as unsafe with ineffective teachers and unable to meet minimum academic markers. As mentioned previously, the school had lost many students to private or parochial schools. The previous principal had been at the school for two years and had begun the process repairing the perception of the school and bringing back some of the lost families. Mrs. Rizzuto provided much needed stability to continue that work.

Attitudes, perceptions, and influences related to bullying. As stated earlier in this chapter, it is important to understand how the participants in this study define bullying as well as the experiences that might have led them to those definitions. The conceptual framework for this study shows that I believe there is a connection between the principal's sum experiences and his or her approach. This also is important as it reveals some insight into how the principal chooses those who help him or her lead in this area. In her definition, Mrs. Rizzuto focused on the school district's definition of bullying. She states:

Bullying is when I am constantly, whether verbally or physically, harassing you continuously and it goes on and for some reason if I'm the person being bullied I cannot get it to stop. . . . If the kid is really feeling victimized by whatever this person is doing, whether they think it's bullying or not, and it goes over a period of time it's bullying. (Mrs. Rizzuto)

As we talked about her personal and professional experiences, Mrs. Rizzuto talked about how times have changed and how expectations also seemed to have changed since she was a child:

I can remember times in my life where somebody will say they went overboard with the teasing, but in my mind it's teasing, this was before, and I'm old, bullying was not even a word, but I remember it being hurtful but again I think we were always empowered to . . . solve your problem. . . . So I can remember a few times that I kind of felt like somebody went overboard but I worked it out. And I always had those kinds of parents that were like you got to work it out. And I kind of did the same thing with my own kids. (Mrs. Rizzuto)

When she began to talk about professional experiences with bullying, Mrs. Rizzuto elaborated on the evolution of bullying and the ability of situations to be controlled:

I think sometimes classrooms can become breeding grounds because the teachers aren't paying attention and then plus whatever goes on in the hall and all the other places . . . and I think there was a time that we blew off more to teasing and this and that, but as more has changed in the country you become more cognizant and so what we say here is we take everything seriously, and we're going to investigate and then we're going to tell parents what we found. (Mrs. Rizzuto)

She went on to share a recent story of bullying at Ruth Middle that surfaced after a period of time. She shared that after much time and attention, they were able to make significant progress on the situation and also created a strong ally out of the student's mother.

Mr. Munson, one of the school's assistant principals, was very descriptive in his definition of bullying:

Bullying is really . . . a one-way street. There's a student that's being picked on, whether it's cyber-bullying, whether it's verbal abuse, whether it's physical abuse, any type of emotional abuse that a student is going through. . . . That means the bully is doing all the work and the other person is not responding, not

reacting, not doing anything to provoke that person to pick on them and . . . it just comes in a variety of forms . . . it can occur in so many different ways. (Mr. Munson)

Mr. Munson went on to share that as a child he was both the perpetrator and the victim of bullying. He described how his home situation often led him to bully others and, as he got older and became an athlete and more popular he continued to bully other students. These experiences help him as he tries to recognize and address bullying in his current role. He points out that as an assistant principal he often encounters situations where a student claims bullying but after investigation finds that the students are provoking one another. This is true in particular during his time in middle school where he says “In middle school they’re—I won’t say they’re oblivious to it, but they are just not as savvy in working within the constraint of the definition of bullying where they’ll do things and say well, they’re bullying me first and that’s why I did it back” (Mr. Munson).

After talking about his experiences with bullying, Mr. Munson shared his general opinion of bullying:

Honestly, it’s not right. In the light of a lot of different things that’s going on today, when we were younger, or at least when I was younger, bullying was different, and then you hear a lot of people say it was a rite of passage, it’s all those different things. You kind of dealt with it and you either fought your way through it, you avoided it, you ignored it. Today that’s more of a challenge and kids are definitely more extreme in how they’re dealing with it, whether its bringing weapons to school or even taking their own lives so, we have to approach it differently today than we did when I was growing up. (Mr. Munson)

I also spent some time with the two counselors at Ruth Middle School. As counselors, Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Martin are often on the front lines of bully prevention

for the school and have unique insight into the principal's approach. When defining bullying Mrs. Howard said that a child is being bullied when he or she is being harassed or bothered and is unable to defend him or herself. Mrs. Martin added that signs of bullying also include a student missing school or when you notice that a student's behavior has changed. Both counselors also shared very compelling personal experiences with bullying. Mrs. Martin shared an experience from her childhood and how that shapes her approach and opinions today:

I can remember there was family that lived like caddy corner across the street from us and the whole family liked to fight, I'm serious, the entire family from the mother on down. This young lady was about two to three years older than I was but she would wait for me to get off the bus, she would try to jump me. She could look out her window and watch me as I would leave out of my house and go to the store. I was in elementary and I used to get to the store but for some reason or another, her looking out of that window she still would see as I passed and would meet me at the corner ready to fight so I actually had to learn how to defend myself. . . . Since I've been through that part of it, when a student comes in and talks about, they've been bullied or a different situation, I can kind of pick up and say well, okay, what actually is being said to you? (Mrs. Martin)

She goes on to say that when it is found that there is bullying "Action needs to be taken and I don't like haste . . . it needs to be taken care of. . . . So, overall, I take it very seriously" (Mrs. Martin).

Mrs. Howard also shared experiences of bullying as a child that she also uses with her students when she has opportunities to talk with them about bullying. She states that she "tells the kids all the time when I go to the class, don't let me find out that you're bothering somebody because I was bothered like that as a child and I hate to see people hurt." She also shared that "If children trust you, they'll talk with you. If they feel like

you care about them and they feel like you really got their best interest at heart . . . you're the person that they can confide in, I think you can go toward a long way to building trust with the student." She shared a story from her professional life that guides her approach as a school counselor:

My very first experience with it wasn't a good one. Back, let me see, I can keep up with the date because at that time I had my second child and she was born in 1992 and that particular year I was working at [a nearby middle school], it was back then that that was our very first instance where we had a boy who was harassing a girl at school and the thing that was so unique and I'll never forget about this situation is that he harassed her to the point administration hid her in school, but we didn't know that that's what they were doing. Finally they took her out of isolation, moved her back to class and he actually came to school and killed her. That was in the news, that was big in the news back then. And I'll never forget that day, that was awful because he came in . . . around the side where the media center is, walked through those double doors, came in through where the eighth grade hall is, went to the classroom, asked to see the student, asked to see her when I guess he had found out she was back into the regular school population, the teacher said no, to go to class because he was a student there but he hadn't been to school that day, he pushed her back, went in and proceeded to just stab her to death in front of all those students. . . . That thing still haunts me to this day because I knew that student. (Mrs. Howard)

Perceptions of the role of the principal. Ruth Middle School is a large urban school. As such, an assessment of bullying at the school reflects the range of perceptions and realities generally associated with similar schools. While the participants see very little true bullying as they defined it and have seen a decrease over the last few years, there is some worry that it is really difficult to know how the school is actually doing. Students may be afraid or unwilling to come forward. Bystanders are also a constant work in process. The word snitch has become a common term used in the school among students and hinders bystanders in many situations from talking openly with school staff.

A snitch is seen as someone who tells on someone else and is often associated with jailhouse terminology. The school is actively addressing this culture as they work to build a sense of community. Another concern is the practice of burning or roasting. Students and parents often misinterpret this practice as bullying. Both terms refer to students alternating making critical remarks about one another and have become increasingly common over the last couple of years. This is also a behavior that is being actively addressed at the school. Participants did share that when it comes to bullying, students and adults at Ruth have a common and clear understanding of the expectations making it much easier to address when it is identified.

The participants from Ruth also spoke briefly about the culture at the school as it relates to bullying. Mrs. Rizzuto shared the following thoughts about the school's culture:

They know they can come to us. We don't turn them away. The kids know they can report anything; we're going to investigate. Because I'm usually out there talking with them, the APs are talking with them; we're all out there amongst them. So they're always coming up and telling us stuff. I think we've kind of been able to create that kind of air with having that kind of relationships with the students that you can tell us stuff. So they'll tell you probably more than you ever want to hear. I think that's where it comes and just like the teacher with the relationships in the classroom, the same thing we try to have relationships with the students in the building. If nothing else they feel like they can come to us and say, well I think so and so is bullying me. A lot of times when kids want to report stuff, like bullying or whatever, it many times opens the door up to a lot of other issues that are going on or some counseling issues that the student needs. (Mrs. Rizzuto)

When asked about the culture around bullying, Mr. Munson responded, "I'd say there's definitely an awareness and I think that's every staff, every grade level. . . . I truly

believe that everyone is aware that bullying is out there and we're trying to do everything we can to make sure that we are alleviating that." When asked whether or not stakeholders saw the culture as positive, he said, "I'd say the majority, yes. I'd say 90% of them. I'd say it's positive. The awareness is there and we're on the same page just in terms of knowing what the expectations are."

Mrs. Martin talked about the diversity of the school when talking about culture:

It's very urban here. It's a city school, but the kids get along with everyone. It is a school of diversity. There's an acceptance of one's diversity. I've noticed with our bullying, they do not tease kids about their ethnicity, about their religion; we do not have that, about their sex. (Mrs. Martin)

Mrs. Howard also talked about the school's diversity. She noted that diversity often leads to confusion and misunderstanding. She stated that, as a counselor, she has seen incidents of bullying that stemmed from misunderstandings about one's culture. She said that they never seemed to be about race though and that, in most instances, once students understood one another, the incidents would often resolve one another.

The participants also shared their views on the attitudes and perceptions that exist about the school with regards to bullying. Mr. Munson talked about how varied the perceptions are:

I think you have a variety of extremes. You have some that think that bullying occurs all the time, you have others who don't look at it as being a big deal, you have others that are saying, well, you know, everybody's going to be bullied. I spoke with a parent in the hall or in the parking lot one evening and she's like, well bullying is going to take place, so it's just a matter of how extreme is it going to be? Talk to other parents and they're saying, well my son's not bullying a student, well they're just having a disagreement. You have others that are saying somebody's looking at my child wrong and I want them disciplined. So we have

a variety of views. But it kind of fits our population, too, because you have a variety, or a very diverse population. We have some high SES families, we have some low SES families, and dealing with some of the cultural aspects of bullying and what's acceptable in one culture versus in another culture, we're having those—we have those clashes as well. (Mr. Munson)

He attributed students' perceptions in part to their difficulty code switching. Mr. Munson defines code switching as the ability to move between varying sets of expectations and norms depending on the setting, such as expectations at home versus those at school.

Mrs. Rizzuto also shared Mr. Munson's sentiments by noting that while students often want to call everything bullying, teachers many times fail to recognize it when it is actually happening. She noted that teachers are willing, however, to highlight problems as they see them. She believes this is a direct result of the school's structured approach to the issue as well as the teachers' genuine concern for students' well-being.

Mrs. Howard agreed that students are quick to identify bullying and in many instances parents are as well. On the positive side, surveys have revealed that, while being quick to identify bullying, students and parents share the perception that bullying will be handled at the school once it is identified. She attributes this perception to clearly defined expectations at the school along with clear protocols such as the use of the district bullying reporting form. Mrs. Martin added that incoming parents often see bullying as a big problem at the school. She points out, however, that this is not surprising as this is a typical middle school perception for parents.

As with attitudes and perceptions about bullying, participants had concrete views about their perceptions of the principal's influence over those attitudes and perceptions. Mrs. Rizzuto believes that she has been able to use her influence help teachers overcome

their own personal biases. This is in large part due to her emphasis on reporting with teachers. Teachers have gotten to a point where they report bullying anytime there is a suspicion or a student shares a concern with them. Even though most reports don't pan out, according to Mrs. Rizzuto, consistently reporting shows that bullying is taken seriously at the school.

When asked about the Mrs. Rizzuto's ability to influence perceptions, Mr.

Munson shared the following:

She's really big on trying to get the staff to understand all of our students, not just the quote unquote "good students" but every student and trying to build relationships with every student. Because even with some of the more challenging students, with that relationship you can help influence and guide and hopefully impact them to kind of change some of those bullying behaviors or letting them know what's acceptable and not. I think she's been good with charging and forging that education piece of the staff and to some degree, even some of the parents. (Mr. Munson)

Mrs. Howard said that leadership allows Mrs. Rizzuto to influence perceptions of bullying at the school:

The principal's the leader of the school. They're the ones who need to set the tone. They're the ones who set the guidelines; they're the ones who set up the different rules for staff and different common goals, the different aspects of our everyday school life. That's the person, to me, who needs to set the tone for the students also. Even if you have an AP [assistant principal] who's in charge of each grade level, I still think administration, the head person, needs to be the one who sets the tone overall. (Mrs. Howard)

All of the participants at Ruth clearly stated that the principal has influence over the attitudes and perceptions that exist about bullying in the school community. It is equally important, however, to understand to what degree the principal has the

responsibility to shape perceptions within the school. One's influence can be the product of his or her position, but understanding one's responsibility to influence creates a call for action. Mrs. Rizzuto commented, "We have a lot of responsibility and it's about how we model. It's the things we talk about, our focus." Mr. Munson repeated this sentiment, "I definitely think as the leader of the school, the school is going to follow the leader's lead and if the leader picks up a flag and carries that flag . . . I definitely believe the people will follow." Both Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Martin echoed those comments.

Principal leadership. The participants at Ruth talked a great deal about Mrs. Rizzuto's leadership in the area of bullying. As they shared, they talked about her approach to bullying as well as how she communicates about it. They shared the protocols and procedures Mrs. Rizzuto has established for addressing bullying. In addition, they discussed the successes and ongoing challenges they have seen with bullying at Ruth.

Mr. Munson talked about how Mrs. Rizzuto works with the administrative staff in her approach to bullying:

What she'll do is she'll just ask us once we get a reported case, we being the assistant principals will share it with her, then she'll tell us to go through the investigation, identify whether it is or it isn't. If there's a Facebook situation, she'll have us get the SRO involved, and then from there we'll pretty much interview students if necessary and then contact the parents and let them know they've found it or not, and so—she's very active in that process. Once we're done, she'll ask us for follow-up, give me a critique or just follow up with feedback and once the students return, or if the bully, if he was suspended for the five days, she'll want a mediation with the students and the counselor, so that's a mandatory thing. . . . She pretty much comes to the grade level administrator and pretty much gives us the charge to go and make sure that it's fixed. She's a head on kind of person. (Mr. Munson)

Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Martin both talked about Mrs. Rizzuto's clear expectations in her approach. Mrs. Rizzuto has made clear that she expects the adults to intervene on behalf of students. Those in position to address any concerns, such as counselors or assistant principals should take immediate action when they become aware of concerns.

When asked about how she approaches bullying, Mrs. Rizzuto emphasized the need to address everything that comes up related to bullying. She also talked about the value of building relationships and working with victims and how those things allow for a complete picture of the school as well as an advantage of staying ahead of other problems that may come:

Besides just being really cognizant of how we are handling discipline is we now take a lot more time figuring stuff out, putting interventions in place, as opposed to just saying OSS and call it a day . . . but we end up with good relationships with kids and parents by doing it with some of your toughest kids and parents. . . . You have to invest that time to figure out. I would say the good thing about it is it brings to light either kids that do tend to pick on other kids or create drama wherever they go, and it also kind of alerts you to students who are very sensitive to stuff. Because a lot of times I'll suggest to parents that you may want to let my counselors talk to them and work with them because we have to help them also find better ways when somebody is saying something hurtful. You've got to have to have a coping mechanism, and so it kind of brings to light that there's kids that we got to help one way or the other. (Mrs. Rizzuto)

Mrs. Rizzuto's communication about bullying is an important part of her leadership on the issue. She believes in establishing her expectations around bullying, but also emphasizes the importance of educating staff, students, and parents on bullying as a means of combating it:

When we're talking about bullying we talk about what it is. Also we say we talk about that we don't tolerate it. And that's kind of like even when we talk

individually with students, I mean the message they go out with is that it's not tolerated. If we find out, we're going to come for you. If we find out you're doing it again, you're going to get a harsher consequence. So the kids know that because, just kind of hearing us talk—talking to staff that we're not going to tolerate it. . . . I'm always at all my PTA meetings and if it comes up then sometimes we'll talk about it. It is how can I help my child. How can I make sure they have coping mechanisms. How can I anti-bully my child. And that is really should be what parents need to do, is how do I make my child a defense system against bullying. (Mrs. Rizzuto)

In order to get out her message on bullying, Mrs. Rizzuto takes advantage of several opportunities to talk about the issue. Mr. Munson talked about the various settings for conversations about bullying as well as Mrs. Rizzuto's language when she talks:

We've addressed [bullying] during open houses at the beginning of the school year. We have bullying sessions where when we are talking to students as a class. She'll send Connect Ed messages out to parents. During PTA meetings it's addressed, grade level meetings for us it's addressed, in the classrooms it's addressed. So we talk about it quite a bit. We hear her talk about what bullying is and what it isn't because most, like I said earlier, most situations, what students are claiming to be bullying, it's not. We talk about the need to report . . . regardless of whether you're a teacher, student, whether you want to do it anonymously. I've heard her tell the parents be aware of what your child is doing online. . . . I've heard her share a lot of those different things with faculty, staff, and students as well. She's very direct when she communicates. It definitely helps because with her directness there's no way you can get it confused. (Mr. Munson)

As part of her leadership on bullying, Mrs. Rizzuto has established a clear set of protocols and procedures. Of utmost importance for her is the expectation that no one minimizes or dismisses reports of bullying. The first member of the administration team, including the counselors, to receive a report of bullying is expected to address it. She said, "We don't pawn it off. If they [counselors] get it, they deal with it. If we

[administration] get, we deal- if it comes to me, I deal with it.” Once the report is received, a district bully reporting form is filled out and an investigation is commenced. All students involved are interviewed and parents are notified. As a safeguard, administration is to be notified, even if the counselors handle the incident. Any incidents that will require a consequence are forwarded on to Mrs. Rizzuto or an assistant principal. One of the major components for Mrs. Rizzuto has been the inclusion of mediation and ongoing support and monitoring for bullies and victims. She consistently lauded the school’s guidance counselors for their ability to mediate situations and counsel students.

Mrs. Rizzuto’s leadership has led to many successes at Ruth Middle School. According to Mrs. Rizzuto, one of the greatest successes in the area of bully prevention has been the changing culture at the school. This has been in part because of the establishment of more efficient procedures for staff and students. This has in turn led to positive parent feedback about the school’s direction and has contributed to the school’s growth over the last few years. Mr. Munson sees success in the growth of a more proactive approach for the school’s staff as well as with students’ willingness to share their concerns with adults. He also emphasized the mediation program as an area of success for Ruth. Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Martin both cited a common understanding of bullying among students, staff, and parents along with a reduction of incidents as successes.

Although the school has had success in the area of creating a positive culture around bullying, it is not without continued challenges. The school is still trying to work with parents and students to create a consistent definition of what bullying is. According

to Mrs. Rizzuto and Mrs. Howard, the overuse and misuse of the term creates confusion and leads to a hypersensitive culture. Participants also mentioned technology as a growing challenge. Music and television's impact on culture along with the emergence of social media are particularly challenging in a middle school environment and create unique challenges especially as it relates to bullying.

Table 5 lists the actions or attitudes on the part of Ms. Rizzuto that contributes to the overall anti-bullying culture at Ruth. The attitudes and actions referenced in the table reflect the statements of the participants during the interview portion of the data collection process. The table notes the action or attitude as well as the source of the data. The table provides a visual representation of the perception of the principal's influence of the anti-bullying culture by both the principal herself as well as the staff leaders at the school. The table shows that there is continuity between the way Mrs. Rizzuto sees her approach and that of her school leaders.

Table 5

Principal's Approach to Bullying: Actions or Attitudes that Contribute to Anti-Bullying Culture at Ruth Middle School by Source

Action or Attitude	Principal	School Leaders
Emphasizes adult reporting and intervention	X	X
Expects immediate action involving bullying	X	X
Open/routine communication about bullying and expectations	X	X
Emphasizes relationships	X	
Has high expectations for teachers and students	X	X

Table 5

(Cont.)

Action or Attitude	Principal	School Leaders
Develops targeted strategies based on data		X
Believes in educating teachers and parents about bullying		X
Establishes clear protocols and procedures	X	X

Components of the school's program. All of the participants at Ruth Middle School have participated in some form of personal and staff training in the area of bully prevention. Personal training for the participants at Ruth has included the school district's procedural training, the school district's annual Safe School's Conference, and some personal research, particularly for Mr. Munson. All of the participants have engaged in school level training offered by the school's guidance counselors on bullying as well. This training was primarily procedural in nature. In addition to the counselor training for the staff at the beginning of the year, the entire staff is engaged in ongoing PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) training. The PBIS model is designed to create positive interventions for staff as they deal with students and includes several bullying topics within the program.

The keys to the success Ruth Middle School experienced over the last few years were varied for each participant. After speaking to the importance of the PBIS program and how it has improved expectations and procedures for both students and teachers,

Mrs. Rizzuto emphasized the school's team approach along with the strength of the counseling department at the school:

Everybody helping. I would say the biggest thing is all of us taking it seriously. And even though kids still talk about bullying, I think the parents walk away satisfied that we took it seriously, we did something. Many times we offer some additional counseling to the victim. . . . And, you know, I think overall when kids know we take it seriously, because a lot of times they say I don't know why I'm in here because this really wasn't a big deal, like no, it is a big deal. And I think they get that message that we're just not going to get away with this stuff. I might do it, but somebody's eventually going to report me. And once you get reported then, you know, you're going to be dealing with us. (Mrs. Rizzuto)

Mr. Munson cited relationship building, being proactive, and student empowerment as keys. He also noted Mrs. Rizzuto's attention to data and the school mediation program. He focused on education, however, as the foundation for their success:

Education and just going back earlier, just trying to educate the parents, trying to educate the students, trying to educate the staff, understanding what it is and what it isn't, so I think the education has been the big piece for us. (Mr. Munson)

He went on to talk about building a sense of pride and leadership within students:

One thing we're trying to do is have them dress up, you know, if you dress up, you look good, sometimes you're going to feel good, and I'm always telling the kids that we don't do that in my pride, that's not what we do, that's not who we are, that's not what we represent and so, when they get into things, they—at least they pause about that, and they have to think about it and I tell them all the time, we're building alpha males, we want leaders, we want students who are doing the right thing. (Mr. Munson)

Each participant also shared what he or she believed were his or her school program's most critical components for creating an anti-bullying atmosphere at Ruth. The underlying theme with each participant's response most frequently involved communication and consistency. Mrs. Howard referred to the orientation for students at the beginning of the year as well as the consistent use of the school district's bully reporting form. Mr. Munson and Mrs. Martin emphasized the focus on educating students about culture, tolerance, and bullying. Mrs. Martin also talked about the clarity and consistency of the protocol and procedures that have been established by Mrs. Rizzuto. Mrs. Rizzuto mentioned the school's counseling program and its focus on mediation as a critical component in Ruth's success. She also highlighted the school's PBIS program. In addition to creating positive interventions for staff, the program is grounded in establishing and communicating clear and consistent procedures for students:

We're a PBIS school and we've kind of used that as a vehicle to really continue to put more and more procedures in place. The first year I was here they had just started. With PBIS it's all about putting procedures and supervision in place to kind of create a positive environment and reduce behavior issues. . . . I think its [PBIS] contributed a lot. I think it's ended a lot of conflict in the halls and in the common areas where kids mix with other kids. I was a high school person and I tell the APs here, you get energy in your building, and middle school has higher energy than any of the other schools. A lot of PBIS stuff lowers the energy because it's structured; it's organized. (Mrs. Rizzuto)

School visits. I was able to visit Ruth several times during my research. As I visited the school, I took the opportunity to speak with several staff members. I also watched the interactions of students, staff, and visitors to the school as the opportunity presented itself. In addition to speaking with staff members, I looked for visual data that

correlated to the data gained from interviews along with the data used to help select the school as a case study school. An overall sense of the school's culture was also a key in my observations as I tried to gain a sense of the school's identity, especially as it related to anti-bullying efforts. I made two specific visits for the purpose of performing formal observations of the students and staff as they interacted in non-classroom common area settings. I used the observation guide (Appendix C) to note interactions among students and staff for these visits.

The first formal observation was conducted in the school's cafeteria during the lunch service. I identified this observation as guided as one of the assistant principals was with me throughout much of the observation. He offered comments on the procedures and was available to me for questions, as I deemed necessary. He was proud to share much of what Ruth Middle was doing for students during our time together. Throughout the lunch service, students entered the cafeteria and made their way to assigned tables by classroom. They had a great deal of freedom to move around as they got their lunch or drinks. As classes finished their lunch a couple of students from each class stayed behind and cleaned their class' tables. There were also several parents eating lunch with their children. They also sat with their student's class. Teachers for each class ate their lunch at the table with their students. There was a sense of chaos as students entered. It was loud along with a great deal of unnecessary movement. Once students were seated, however, they were calm, talked at a reasonable level, and seemed generally respectful of one another. Teachers had minimal interactions with one another in this setting. When they did, it was brief and appeared to be positive. Teachers instead

focused primarily on students while keeping enough distance to give students some level of perceived independence. I observed several conversations between students and teachers, often initiated by a student. This would suggest strong relationships between some students and teachers. Each conversation was pleasant and respectful. Students did, however, generally keep their distance from teachers. This was to be expected in a middle school setting. Consistent with the responses from the participants, adults in this setting clearly took responsibility for students. They actively supervised students and looked for opportunities to engaged with students and build or strengthen relationships.

The second observation at Ruth took place during the school's dismissal. Ruth dismisses students by grade level and hall to various destinations around the campus designated for different modes for leaving campus, such as car rider, walker, or bus rider. I shadowed the school's eighth grade assistant principal as he dismissed the eighth grade hall. He dismissed the students one classroom at a time and then walked with the group that went to the buses for dismissal. Several teachers also walked with students to the bus lot. Once we arrived at the bus lot, all grade levels congregated there to wait for their buses. In a unique challenge for Ruth, buses arrive in two waves, resulting in about half of the students having to wait up to 20 minutes for their buses to arrive. The assistant principal explained that this has been difficult for the school and has required significant work on the procedures and routines around bus dismissal and bus holding. As students walked to the bus area, they were generally well-behaved. Once they arrived at the buses, I observed a lot of horse play. Most of horse play was insignificant but there were a few incidents that were more aggressive. Students were expected to get into lines for

their bus as teachers stood at the head of each line holding a sign with the bus number for that line on it. Students whose buses were already there got into their lines quickly. There was very little interaction between teachers and students in this setting. Most teachers did supervise students and spoke positively when they did interact. Students generally avoided the adults in this setting. As some students engaged in horse play, they often ignored the adults' requests to stop or get into their lines. I noted that this type of interaction was limited primarily to the same two teachers. There were several adults whom I had previously noted to have stronger relationships with students in this setting. During this observation I noted that they tended to congregate together to talk to one another. This further limited their interaction with their students. Teachers seemed to rely on the assistant principal to manage this setting. This observation was contradictory with my observations in the cafeteria and other settings around the school. In this setting, teachers supervised students and did intervene once it became necessary, but they lacked the proactive intervention and relationship building that was mentioned in interviews with participants and observed at other times and in other settings throughout the school. As a result, students struggled to follow procedures and exhibited more negative and bullying type behaviors than I observed in other settings.

Henry Louis Gehrig High School

An overview. Gehrig High School is a much smaller school than the traditional high school within the school district in which it is located. The school is also very young by comparison having been established in 2006. The school serves 145 students in ninth through twelfth grades with 15 teachers and 5 support staff members. Mr. Guidry

serves as the school's only administrator but has empowered his support staff to assume roles that support various aspects of the school's administration. Gehrig is also a diverse school with 44% African American, 20% White, 20% Hispanic, and 14% Asian students. Seventy-eight percent of the students at Gehrig receive free or reduced lunch services along with 25% of the students classified as exceptional children. The school's performance composite for the 2011-2012 school year was 89.9%. Gehrig High's vision and mission statements, as reflected on the school's website, reflect the relative young state of the school and the opportunities that provides for growth:

Vision Statement:

Gehrig High School is becoming an exceptional learning institution where students are provided a safe, supportive and challenging environment where all students learn and whose graduates are capable of achieving a balance between their self-actualization and their functioning as a valued member of society.

Mission Statement:

It is our mission to prepare the next generation of students to be accountable and responsible for their education. Students and staff will grow together in a safe and nurturing learning environment. Gehrig High School will provide the tools necessary to empower students for lifelong learning in the areas of Health and Life Sciences, Medical Careers, and Information Technology. Our students will graduate equipped to achieve optimal success and compete in the global community.

Gehrig High School is also part of the school district's high school choice and magnet program. The school touts a small environment with personalized learning, advanced technology in each classroom, a real-life, rigorous curriculum, and experienced and qualified teachers. The school offers health sciences and information technology as parts of its programs. The health sciences program is described on the school's website as follows:

Gehrig High School's Health Sciences program is designed for students interested in a career as a health-care professional. Students are introduced to the health field, the concepts of personal, family and community health and disease control through classroom instruction, case studies, hands-on activities, interactive computer modules and internships. Health Science students learn:

- Medical terminology and abbreviations
- Human anatomy and physiology
- Risk factors for all body systems
- Tools for recognizing diseases related to all body systems
- Behaviors that keep the systems of the body healthy
- Trends in health care
- Legal and ethical issues related to the medical field and
- Healthcare career options related to each body system

The Information Technology program is described as follows:

The Information Technology program at Gehrig High School is designed to prepare students for a career in the medical IT field or other IT-related field. Information Technology professionals are needed in doctors' offices, hospitals, nursing homes and other health care facilities in increasing numbers. By using the Microsoft IT Academy program, students can be certified in Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access and Publisher) and earn professional level certifications in Computer Science. IT students learn:

- Advanced functionality in core Office applications
- Design and implementation of databases, especially as related to the medical field
- Visual Basic and C# programming languages and how to create games and applications for Windows, Xbox, and Windows Phone
- Hands-on experience with programming other machines such as robots and game consoles
- Critical and logical thinking skills that can be applied to any subject area

The principal. Mr. Guidry serves as the principal at Gehrig High School. He is a former math teacher who also served as a math coach at the school district level. After serving as an assistant principal in two schools in the same district, he became the principal at Gehrig in the spring of 2011. He has been at the school for 2 and ½ years. He was the third principal in the school's short history and has overseen growth in the

school's academic as well as safety perceptions. When asked about his favorite part of the principalship, Mr. Guidry responded:

Graduation: Seeing kids who never thought that they would ever make it to that point. Not only that, they turn and look at me and say because of something you've done it allowed me to get to this point. Just seeing kids be successful who no one ever imagined. I have kids in the building who for their entire elementary and middle school never passed an assessment or state exam, anything. And they get here and all of a sudden the light bulb comes on, because the environment is conducive for them. So just providing that type of environment that creates a pattern of success for not just some but pretty much all of the students. So I get excited about that. (Mr. Guidry)

Attitudes, perceptions, and influences related to bullying. When talking with Mr. Guidry it was clear that he had very concrete thoughts on bullying and his approach to it. During our conversation he began by providing his definition of bullying:

It is a continuation of, or a pattern of one student creating an atmosphere that's not conducive for another. Causes someone to feel uncomfortable via actions, verbal, nonverbal, physical. Putting a student in a situation where on a continual basis they're putting them in a situation where there is an issue where they don't feel comfortable in it. I look at it as, where students feel degraded, feel unsafe, or there is an atmosphere created by someone who just wants to dominate another. (Mr. Guidry)

He goes on to talk about his experiences with bullying and how those shape his opinions.

As a child, Mr. Guidry was bullied because he was passive. He "was probably one of those kids who always thought the best way to handle things is not to handle it with violence or to retaliate, just walk away" (Mr. Guidry). He goes on to say that other students saw that as a sign of weakness. "I can remember in high school I had a kid that was smaller than I was because he knew that I wasn't the fighting type he would

constantly, I mean every day in the locker room he would hit me with a shirt or pop me with a shirt or tap me beside the head.” As a teacher Mr. Guidry recalled early in his career teaching in a very hostile environment with 99% of the students receiving free or reduced services. Students there regularly brought issues from home and community to school. He noted that there was picking constantly. Later on he taught in a school that had a greater extreme among students. Bullying revolved around socio-economics with students from lower socio-economic backgrounds more frequently bullying students from higher socio-economic backgrounds. He attributed much of that dynamic to the poorer students in that school feeling intimidated by the wealthier students. Bullying was often their way of leveling the playing field.

After speaking to his experiences Mr. Guidry talked directly about his feelings about bullying:

I don't like it; period. And it may go back to what I have experienced. I probably vowed when I was a kid that I would not allow- because I felt back then bullying was not a big thing in schools. It was take up for yourself. Don't let people pick on you. It was not we are going to protect the child that can't protect himself. I probably said to myself that anytime I become a leader over anything I will not tolerate or allow that type of behavior to happen. And I think that's why my school is the way it is because I just don't put up with it and I tell students, you know, I don't threaten them, but I do warn them that if a student in my building is going to feel uncomfortable because of you then someone has to go. It is one of the things I don't allow. (Mr. Guidry)

I also had the privilege of speaking with Ms. Dickey. Because of Gehrig High's small number of students, Ms. Dickey serves in many capacities at the school, including curriculum facilitator, magnet coordinator, and designee in the principal's absence.

Playing such a key role at Gehrig allows Ms. Dickey to provide substantial leadership in

the school as well as insight into the principal's approach to bullying. Ms. Dickey defined bullying as follows:

I think it's a direct intimidation of another person to make someone feel less valued. And it can be done from different perspectives. A lot of people think that bullying is just physical. But sometimes it can be physical, it can be emotional, it can even be through the cyber-bullying, just so many different dynamics, but it's a direct intimidation to make someone feel less valued and less appreciated. I can see, someone shoving, someone's pushing, and sometimes from the emotional standpoint when I walk down the hall you could see the kid's eyes. (Ms. Dickey)

Ms. Dickey also shared rich experiences about bullying from her professional and personal life. She delved into why she believes some students bully and how she personally approaches issues:

I guess for me whenever I saw bullying sometimes it wasn't necessarily a situation bullying, but bullying in a roundabout sense. Sometimes what I found out in dealing with children that the most weight of an iceberg is really at the bottom of it. And what you found at the tip of them, bullying somebody, there is something that is underlying that is causing them to do certain things. They might want to lash out because their home environment is so tumultuous, or so violent that when they get here say I got to let that out, there's got to be an outlet, and so I'm going to find someone who's fragile, someone who I can put all of that on, so I mean I've had a couple of experiences that that was the case, and, you know then I would call students in and once I settled it with them, the one who was doing the bullying will sit and have an extended conversation beyond that, really what's going on. So it just opens up a totally different dynamic of what you expect. Then sometimes you just find those people who are just normally bullies. I did it because people see me here as being a leader and if I do it everybody else is going to do it. (Ms. Dickey)

From her childhood, she shared the following two experiences:

I had a very bad experience. I grew up in a Christian home and so the background for us was that there were certain beliefs that we had to have. Me and my sister couldn't wear like pants, we couldn't wear like anything that like I guess quote

unquote as they said that's the things that what a man would wear. And so it was just like every day the kids were like why are you wearing them dresses every day? And you explain it to them, but after a while it became like this picking thing, they would pick at you every day, every day, every day, and I was just like if you just get me out of elementary school I will survive. Then I get to middle school and there was a situation where you define yourself as how you look. I wasn't ugly, but I wasn't the best looking thing. And so one day I tried to dress up and I thought I looked nice. I had some lipstick on and this boy's like, you look like a cheeseburger! Just little things that kids will do just to see was I going to say anything, and I was never a kid that. I said that if I could survive this environment and get out of here I know I'm going to be successful. . . . One [other] incident where I was walking down the hall and I was going to the locker room from basketball practice to take a shower and so these two guys coming up and I'm walking just minding my business and a boy he was like man, that your girl, and a boy yelled out "Man, I wouldn't fuck her with a ten-inch pole," I mean a ten-foot pole, and I'm like—and I mean, it just did, it just—you know, for a person who already struggled with self-esteem, it just made it worse. . . . But I guess in some crazy respects it's made me very non-tolerant toward bullying because I knew how it made me feel as a victim of it. . . . Why would you want to hurt somebody? Because I think it's a personal attack, what is it about this person that you want to personally attack and why? (Ms. Dickey)

Gehrig High School's social worker, Mrs. Maris, and counselor, Mrs. Ford, also participated in the interviews for this study. Mrs. Maris described bullying as "someone that takes advantage, puts down someone that is less strong than they are, or someone that takes their frustrations out on another person that can't defend themselves." Mrs. Ford described bullying as "persistent action toward another student or group that's causing them harm whether it is verbal or nonverbal." She went on to say that you know when you see bullying by "looking at the student's body language, just looking to see if a student feels uncomfortable about what's going on . . . but just really tuning in and being observant."

Neither Mrs. Maris nor Mrs. Ford recalled being the victim of bullying growing up. Mrs. Ford did share instances of other students trying to take advantage of her

because of her small stature but that she had the personality to withstand those incidents. She even found herself on occasion standing up for other students who were being picked on. Because of their roles within the school, however, both ladies have had experience with bullying professionally. Mrs. Ford talked about her experience in smaller innovative high schools. She shared that the smaller settings like Gehrig High led to more of a family atmosphere accounting for the minimal instances of bullying. Mrs. Maris shared one particular experience with a fifth-grade student who was bullying a younger student. The student kept calling the other student names and picking on him. She described how she was able to counsel the bully and gain an understanding of what was driving the student.

Mrs. Maris shared her opinions of bullying:

When I hear bullying I really don't like it. Because when I think about it from a personal level, I think if another person is being bullied then their spirit is being broken. They're being torn down and I don't like that. It leads to other situations that are more detrimental to the victim. Bullying is not a good thing and I think it should always be addressed and especially when you first see it, when you first hear about it. You deal with, because it escalates. A lot of times students that are bullying, they may not understand that that's what they're doing. They don't understand the ramifications of what they're doing to this other person. So I think we see a lot of it now in schools and where we look at the news, you see the results of it and that's why I think it's very important as leaders in the school to be aware, to be very aware, and not only leaders but staff, teachers in the classrooms, you know, the least little thing, you can't, today you can't let it go. You have to deal with it or you'll have a bigger issue on your hands. (Mrs. Maris)

Mrs. Ford talked about bullying more on a global level. She saw the school as a place to be proactive and provide education about bullying:

It's really sad that people feel that they can treat others in any kind of way and think it's okay, and it's dangerous because it does push some which we see in the media that it pushes some kids to feel like they can live no longer. And anything that's happening, whether it's the school environment or in the community that's making someone feel that they don't have a right to live in this country and be in existence, that's a very sad situation. My view is it's very serious, it's something that needs to be on the radar, and the schools are a great place to educate, to do what they can. I mean you can't control everything because kids come from their communities and they bring the baggage with them from out of the community into the schools. But I think it's still the school's job to bring about awareness and address it immediately any time those instances or reports come about. (Mrs. Ford)

Perceptions of the role of the principal. During our conversation, I asked Mr. Guidry to provide an overview of his assessment of bullying at Gehrig High. As he shared his assessment, he focused primarily on the students:

Here, I'll be honest with you; I don't think we've had too many incidents. If it's happening I'll be honest with you, anytime things occur we try to jump on it. My experience here is you have kids who may say something to one another, but a lot of the times kids will come and say something to us, and we try to nip the stuff in the bud. We try to handle the stuff immediately here. We try. I won't say we're perfect but we try. My administrative team knows my role and my focus—well, my focus and my philosophy on things, the quicker you handle it the quicker it—the quicker it will go away. If you wait on it, it's going to get bigger and get bigger and get bigger. . . . We have a zero tolerance, but I would say on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being good, we're probably at an 8, because there are some unknowns, there are always unknowns. You can never be perfect. But because of the simple fact we allow ourselves to be available at any moment and say if you have an issue finds one of us. I feel like we try to do a good job of handling the situations as they come. And so I think we are doing a pretty good job with it. They know that teachers know that if they see any signs of incidents going on, we don't wait until it becomes continual we try to nip it in the bud immediately. (Mr. Guidry)

Ms. Dickey, Mrs. Ford, and Mrs. Maris all shared similar assessments about the school. Each of them noted that the school has minimal reports of bullying and, like Mr. Guidry, they all focused on the students in their assessment. Ms. Dickey commented that

the few incidents that they do have are minor. She noted, “kids do silly stuff, you know, it’s not like they intended to hurt anybody.” Mrs. Ford focused on the comfort with which students who notice a problem will come forward:

We just had a situation happen like that not too long ago where one of our juniors came to the administration and said, hey, I don’t like what I’m seeing, these kids are picking on one of our special needs students that are autistic, and I really don’t like what they are doing. And you know, they stepped up to bring that to the administration’s attention so that administration could intervene. (Mrs. Ford)

When asked why she believed that students felt so comfortable coming forward, she stated, “That is a very easy answer: strong leadership” (Mrs. Ford).

Beyond an overall assessment of bullying at the school the participants at Gehrig talked about the culture in the school as it relates to bullying. Mr. Guidry offered the following insight:

Bullying is not tolerated. That’s the culture that we have here. And the culture is set that if anyone ever feels that they are being bullied that they need to articulate if that’s the case. And if we observe that we need to handle the situation immediately. I think the culture is set that we will not allow anyone to come to school and feel uncomfortable. There are days that students will walk out and have had an uncomfortable day. But I guarantee you it’s probably because none of us ever knew about it and a teacher probably just in their busy time did not articulate that that was a problem. So we want this to be a safe learning environment for all so we try to present that as the culture. (Mr. Guidry)

As she talked about culture, Ms. Dickey talked about the relationships that are being built at Gehrig:

I think what we’ve done here is we set a culture with our kids; we build relationships with our kids. And our kids understand that they want to keep this culture the way it is—you come to school, you feel valued, you feel appreciated.

There is no fighting. The kids know that Mr. Guidry really enforces what he says. We want to create a culture where everybody feels valued, loved, and appreciated here. (Ms. Dickey)

Ms. Dickey elaborated on the relationships that Mr. Guidry builds by pointing out that even in discipline he is working to build relationships with students by taking the time to teach the students. As a result, she notes, “I don’t think we have culture of bullying.”

Mrs. Ford focused on the students at Gehrig when talking about culture. She talked about the level of acceptance among students and trust in caretakers at the school:

We have a very diverse culture we have a gay population, we have lesbian population, you know we have our EC population that makes it very diverse. We have kids that could be easy targets, but because the students know that it won’t be tolerated and because they know we will jump on it immediately if we see something starting up, then that pretty much lets them know up front, hey, this is not the right to do, and that leads into why I say students feel very comfortable with letting somebody know. And because this new thing about snitching, you know, our kids, they’ll give us heads up. We don’t have to worry about hearing something out in the streets or out in the community, I mean they’ll come to us and let us know what’s going on. . . . I think that it just maybe it shapes the culture of acceptance, you know, accepting people for who they are. Having compassion for others even though they may be different. It does set the tone that this is wrong so I shouldn’t involve myself in this type of activity because it’s clearly communicated. (Mrs. Ford)

Attitudes and perceptions can often be as important as reality. The participants at Gehrig shared their thoughts on the attitudes and perceptions that exist in the school community about bullying. They focused primarily on students when describing the attitudes and perceptions that exist in the school. Mr. Guidry said, “Students see it the way we see it. Let’s protect our house. Let’s be a family, you know, we’re all different,

let's be a family.” Mrs. Dickey and Mrs. Ford both commented that students know that bullying won't be tolerated at Gehrig. They know that issues will be addressed. “For the most part out kids know that it is a zero tolerance policy” (Ms. Dickey). Mrs. Ford went on to say of the students that they know that “if anything was brought to our attention, there is going to be an investigation to make sure that the students are acting appropriately.” Mrs. Maris reiterated that the students at Gehrig see the administration as supportive and that issues will be addressed. She added that there is a cooperative relationship with parents who see Mr. Guidry as having students' best interest in mind. They trust that he is making good decisions for students. In addition the staff takes responsibility for students at the school.

Mr. Guidry identified the following factors that he believes drives the attitudes and perceptions about bullying at Gehrig High:

Open communication. I think also when anytime situations happen as I said previously you have to address them. Immediately addressing those situations and those issues I think are factors that help us get to that point. You know, being serious about it and actually presenting the information when we say we are, at the beginning of the school year, like I said during our seven-day orientation with all students when they come in, bullying is a big thing their entire day. And we try to do examples and talk about what bullying is, and based on the policy that we have and, you know, what to do when you feel bullied. So I think some of the things that we try to do are make sure that all students are aware and parents are aware. (Mr. Guidry)

Mrs. Maris focused on students when identifying key factors. She noted “students know they're first—the staff knows that the students are first. Decisions are made based on the students, not what's comfortable for staff, and parents know that” (Mrs. Maris). She went on to say “whatever will help the kids be successful, that's what we're going to

do. Staff knows that.” Mrs. Ford added that leadership is the primary factor in shaping attitudes and perceptions. She said, “They just see through leadership and through the staff that if something is brought to their attention then there is follow through.” Ms. Dickey also mentioned leadership as well as several other specific factors that she believes shapes the attitudes and perceptions of the various stakeholders:

I think the most important is that our kids understand where we’re trying to get them. They understand that most importantly Mr. Williams is not going to tolerate it. We work real hard at building relationships with all our kids. Like maybe like the first two days if you asked me for a student I could probably tell you where they are. That’s how much I got the schedule in my head. Building the relationships with our kids, engaging them in positive things instead of, you know, versus that of negative, encouraging them to be leaders in the building, so that people that may not have fit in you make them feel a part of your group. Having our town hall meetings. . . . They got to authentically know that you care about them. . . . And that’s pretty much what we tell them to create our environment of building relationships. (Ms. Dickey)

It is important to also understand what role the principal plays in creating those attitudes and perceptions. Both Ms. Dickey and Mrs. Ford alluded to the principal as a factor in shaping attitudes and perceptions. As we talked, the participants at Gehrig shared in detail how the principal can and does influence attitudes and perceptions of bullying in the school community. All three of the participants emphatically said that the principal has influence. Ms. Dickey said of Mr. Guidry that “he’s always been a person of integrity and people have to respect you when you have integrity.” She went on to say that he is straightforward with students and teachers. “We never have to worry about what he is thinking.” In addition, she said “he spends time with the kids even when he disciplines them.” In short Ms. Dickey summed up her thoughts by emphasizing that Mr.

Guidry builds relationships and that relationships lead to influence. Mrs. Maris also commented on Mr. Guidry's relationships with students saying, "The kids know that he loves them. I think there is not one kid in there that can say anything negative about Mr. Guidry . . . because he just has a heart for children." She went on to say that there has been a great change at the school as a result of his leadership because he has created a more respectful environment. Mrs. Ford added that Mr. Guidry has influence in part because sets the expectation through his leadership.

In addition to the perceived influence of the principal, it is important to understand what both the principal and the other participants at Gehrig believed to be the principal's responsibility in using that influence. Mr. Guidry focused on communication when talking about his responsibility to use his influence:

I think it starts with me. If I articulate on a regular basis that our tolerance level is zero tolerance and then continue to say to your staff and students and parents that we got to remember that we do not tolerate it here. The more I articulate it, the more it's heard from me the more they understand that this is philosophy and its vision—his expectations for us. So I play a big role. . . . And not only that, taking it serious, taking every complaint serious. As I tell my social worker, my magnet coordinator AP, I tell them all, you take it seriously. It may seem minor, but you investigate. (Mr. Guidry)

Ms. Dickey also talked about the principal's responsibility to lead by example and how he empowers others to lead:

I read a lot, and I read a lot of John Maxwell books and one of things that I see is Mr. Guidry leads by influence, he doesn't like, well this is what you're going to do because this is your job, and he does it by example. I've never seen him do anything where he doesn't do it by example. I mean he empowers people through his influence and not the authoritative. (Ms. Dickey)

Mrs. Maris commented that the principal has a responsibility to set the expectations. She said, “When you look at the school, they have to know what your expectations are. When you know what the expectations are, I think it shapes their mindset.” Mrs. Ford noted that she believes that it is the principal’s responsibility to set the tone and to make sure that everyone knows that there is a no tolerance policy for bullying. She said that everyone must be on the same page and that is the principal’s responsibility.

Principal leadership. The participants at Gehrig talked specifically about Mr. Guidry’s leadership in the area of bullying. Each participant shared thoughts about the principal’s approach, how he addresses bullying, what protocols and procedures he has put in place for bullying, and the success and challenges they are seeing at Gehrig.

Mr. Guidry shared his approach to bullying:

Making sure that we are open about bullying, making sure that we are open to communicating, that we are articulating our expectations. My approach is to make sure that it’s nothing that we try to hide. We don’t try to sweep things under the rug. I personally try to make sure that anything that comes to me that I spend quality time—I mean, every day you’re going to have some issues, you’re going to have some things that you have to take care of. But as I say, I think it takes at least stopping and saying let me hear you and then if I need to come back to you, have a seat in front of my office, have a seat here in the conference room, I will be right with you. To let that child know that, or let anyone know, that it’s a concern and we’re going to address that concern. So I try to approach it where it’s serious to everyone. I want everybody to understand that this is just something we won’t tolerate. We won’t put up with it. And whatever consequences need to be given, we’ll give them. (Mr. Guidry)

When asked about Mr. Guidry’s approach to bullying, Mrs. Maris responded, “Directly. He does not skirt around it. He is direct.”

Mrs. Ford reiterated Mrs. Maris's comments when she said that Mr. Guidry "Sets the tone. He sets the expectations. He lets students know up front what type atmosphere he wants at this school." She also commented that Mr. Guidry believes in addressing issues quickly. She said of Mr. Guidry that he believes that, "When you nip it and address it immediately that kind of diffuses the behavior and the reports." Respect for students and character development are also important in the principal's approach according to Mrs. Ford. She followed up on Mr. Guidry's approach by talking about his town hall meetings and how he holds staff accountable:

One of the things that we do we have check in town hall meetings. We're a small school. But what we do for our town hall meetings since we don't really have an assembly area is we will call everybody into the hall and they sit on the floor and address topics as needed. If the teachers are noticing that something is in the air, things are not going right we confront—we stop it with the students and let them know the expectations. And then too, the principal, if something is brought to the attention there is an immediate investigation to get to the bottom of it. I think most things have been diffused or didn't get to a report standpoint because of the things put in place on the front end. The principal is always, always making sure staff is in place at their posts at the doors greeting students, on cafeteria duty, making sure that staff is actively participating in duty and in their place at the right time supervising students. And like I said, that alone can help diffuse some of the things because you got adults in place making sure that they are on top of it if something is about to boil out over. (Mrs. Ford)

Ms. Dickey shared that Mr. Guidry has a no-nonsense approach. He believes in being proactive and that all the adults have a responsibility to intervene. He also works with students to turn negative traits into positive ones. He often seeks out students that are leaders but using that skill in a negative way and gives them opportunities to lead in a positive way. The centerpiece of his approach however has been building trust and relationships:

When he first came in this building that was a situation they had been through six administrators, I think, before he got here, so he had to even build a culture with getting the teachers to trust him. Building that relationship with the staff, and once he started building the relationship with the staff . . . they were able to bring that same dynamic with their students. (Ms. Dickey)

Talking openly about various issues such as bullying is very important at Gehrig High. This was repeated frequently during the time I spent at the school. Bullying is first discussed during a beginning of the year orientation with students. The orientation is a seven-day series of classroom talks on various topics students need to be familiar with as the year goes on. One of the days is dedicated to bullying. Students are shown a video and engage in conversations about bullying. They talk about what bullying is and what it looks like. In addition they cover procedures and expectations (Guidry, Dickey, and Maris).

Another important element to the communication about bullying at Gehrig is the town hall meetings. As mentioned earlier, town hall meetings are as-needed meetings on any topic that is becoming a concern in the school. Mr. Guidry speaks very openly and directly with students during these meetings. When bullying is a topic, he will talk specifically about details and the expectations that he has. Teachers are also expected at these meetings as a show of solidarity. Classroom follow-up is an important part and expectation of the town hall meetings (Guidry, Ford, and Maris).

In addition to the orientation and town hall meetings, bullying is often a topic at parent events such as PTA meetings or open house (Mr. Guidry). Bullying is also discussed at faculty meetings where the teachers not only hear about expectations and procedures, they will also engage in round-table talks where they will talk about what

they are seeing with the students and what steps they might need to take (Ford and Maris). The issue has also been a topic of morning announcements, particularly as it relates to character development (Mrs. Ford).

As important as opportunities to talk about bullying are, the language that is used during those conversations is equally as important. When talking about bullying, Mr. Guidry states that he always firm, expressing his no-tolerance approach:

I think some of the things that we try to do are make sure that all students are aware and parents are aware. When I have parent meetings, and open house, and stuff like that, I try to address that what our tolerance is, zero tolerance. If I articulate on a regular basis what our tolerance level is and being a zero tolerance and then continue to say to your staff and students and parents that we got to remember that we do not tolerate it here. The more I articulate it, the more it's heard from me the more they understand that this is philosophy and it's vision and exactly what expectation is for us. (Mr. Guidry)

As Mr. Guidry continued, he talked about how he tries to relate to students as he talks to them about bullying:

We try to articulate it based on the district policy. We try to articulate it based on prior experiences as well. Here we are as adults, and some of us have been bullied. Here are our stories. And we try to give them those who may have the mindset to bully the other perspective of what it feels like. And as an adult, if I did it to you how would you feel? If every day you came in and this is what I did to you every day, and you hated coming to school because of the fact when you saw Mr. Guidry you knew he was going to say something or do something to you every day. So we try to articulate in a manner where it's relevant and it's real and let them know anyone in this building can be bullied, no matter who you are. (Mr. Guidry)

Mr. Guidry's comments about bullying are consistent from the students to the staff. Mrs. Ford noted that when talking to the staff, Mr. Guidry uses "the same

language, but the tone is different with staff and children. With children you got to say it in the different way, but the language and the expectation is very consistent.” She says that Mr. Guidry also focuses on staff respect for students as well as good character for both staff and students.

When bullying does happen at Gehrig, Mr. Guidry has developed and communicated a clear set of protocols and procedures for addressing it. It first begins with making sure that students feel comfortable letting an adult, any adult, know what they are experiencing. Adults are expected to be available to students and to immediately notify the school counselor, Mrs. Ford, or the school social worker, Mrs. Maris of concerns. They will then fill out the school district’s bully reporting form and begin an investigation. An investigation includes talking with both students and forwarding on to Mr. Guidry if necessary. Once the investigation is complete, consequences are handed out if warranted and parents are notified. There is also follow-up monitoring and counseling for both the bully and the victim. In addition, bullies are placed on what Mr. Guidry refers to as a success plan. The protocols and procedures at Gehrig were clearly articulated by all the participants.

I also asked each of the participants to share some of the successes they have experienced with bullying at Gehrig since Mr. Guidry has been the principal as well as some of the challenges they still face. Mr. Guidry and Mrs. Maris both noted that the fact that they rarely have bullying incidents is a success in itself. Ms. Dickey commented on the school’s ability to transform students into leaders and the creation of an atmosphere

where all students feel appreciated. Mrs. Ford added, “We get good parent feedback all the time about this is the best choice they ever made for their student.”

Gehrig is still not without challenges however. Mr. Guidry shared the following assessment about the challenges he sees:

Just not knowing whether or not we are successfully addressing every concern or whether or not we are providing an adequate environment where students feel comfortable to come to us. That’s a challenge because students will tell you everything is fine not even knowing whether or not we’re really, truly meeting their needs. Are we really addressing every concern? We don’t know. Because again, some students are probably not articulating, so it’s a challenge to know. I would love for every student to say I feel safe. I doubt every student will say that, but I would love for that. So the challenge to me is am I really being realistic that we don’t really have any issues and trying to figure out ways to help students articulate that they are okay. (Mr. Guidry)

Ms. Dickey mentioned consistency and monitoring on the part of the adults as the greatest challenges she sees. She also noted that television and music are distorting students’ perceptions of reality about what it means to be accepted. Mrs. Ford added that just creating an atmosphere of respect in a high school is a daily challenge.

Table 6 lists Mr. Guidry’s actions or attitudes that contribute to the overall anti-bullying culture at the school. The attitudes and actions referenced in the table reflect the statements of the participants during the interview portion of the data collection process. The table notes the data along with the source. The table shows that, like both Mattingly and Ruth, the principal and the identified school leaders are in a great deal of agreement about the principals’ general approach to bullying.

Table 6

Principal's Approach to Bullying: Actions or Attitudes that Contribute to Anti-Bullying Culture at Gehrig High School by Source

Action or Attitude	Principal	School Leaders
Believes in and practices transparency	X	
Direct and firm	X	X
Develops targeted strategies based on data		
Open/routine communication about bullying and expectations	X	X
Emphasizes adult reporting and intervention	X	X
Has high expectations for teachers and students	X	X
Emphasizes proactive approach		X
Displays a genuine care for students		X
Emphasizes relationships	X	X
Emphasizes good character		X
Establishes clear protocols and procedures	X	X

Components of the school's program. To understand fully the principal's leadership in the area of bullying as well as his or her ability to impact the culture, I spoke with all participants at each school about the components of their program that made it successful. I also asked each participant to share any professional development opportunities they had participated in personally or as a school staff.

Each participant at Gehrig High School holds some form of leadership role. As such, they have generally experienced similar professional development opportunities related to bullying such as the school district's policy overview, the Safe Schools conference described earlier in this chapter, and the district counselor and social worker training on bullying. In addition, Ms. Dickey had the opportunity to participate in an anti-bully training sponsored by her church as well as a training on ninth-grade transitions which included information to help ninth graders cope with and address issues that might relate to school bullying. As a staff, teachers at Gehrig participated in training that included expectations and procedures as well as scenario-based open discussions about bullying. Each of the participants played a part in delivering some aspect of the staff training.

After talking about professional development opportunities, participants shared what they believed were the keys to Gehrig's success in addressing bullying. Participants talked about several things ranging from expectations to teacher buy-in. They did not focus on any one thing or share any particular program. Rather their responses reflected an approach that emphasized leadership and relationship. Mr. Guidry summed it up this way:

Making sure that we are openly communicating what our expectations are. Making sure that we make ourselves available for students who have issues and complaints. Making sure that we are addressing those complaints with all sincerity, and I mean not just sweeping them under the rug or pushing them to the side. Or making sure every student feels valued. Their complaints are valued. And following through. Making sure that we are visible and that we talk to students. I think building relationships with students are very important. If you build a relationship they feel comfortable enough to come and chat with you and

say, hey, there's an issue going on here. That's one of the things we try to do with our students. (Mr. Guidry)

He went on to say:

I just think it's so important that as leaders that students hear us talk about what the expectations are, that we don't leave it just for teachers to articulate it because if it comes from the leader they understand if I have to sit before that leader and say I did not meet your expectations then I know that there are going to be some consequences behind that. So I think it's important that they understand how serious the matter is, how serious we are about the zero tolerance we have here, our policy as far as bullying. And it has to come from me, because if it comes from me, then I think it makes a big difference. They tend to respect what's being said a little bit more. (Mr. Guidry)

Ms. Dickey offered the following thoughts on the keys to Gehrig's success:

I try to create in my rapport with students that relationship where they can come and talk to me about things or what's going on with them and if something is happening how to go about doing it just beyond the school piece. Kids want to see that you're involved with them, go to their basketball games, and go to their ball games. You'll be surprised at the stuff that will stay down right here when they see that you care about them. . . . Building relationships and being proactive—being on active duty. Being proactive, building relationships. (Ms. Dickey)

Mrs. Ford also talked about high visibility for staff as well as leadership, expectations, and student responsibility and empowerment:

I think teachers being visible during class exchanges, teachers and staff as a whole being visible and observant period, throughout the day. My staff is very good with pulling us to the side, saying, hey, I think we need to check into this situation and not holding onto things and letting things build up, but just if they see there's an issue that might be coming up let me know up front so that you can nip it in the bud. Again I say leadership, and expectations of the school environment are a part of the success. Students just accepting the responsibility of what role they

play in the school as a citizen, as a classmate—in regards to respect and responsibility. (Mrs. Ford)

Mrs. Maris also emphasized leadership and expectations. She added that teachers' buy-in is a key to Gehrig's success:

The cornerstone is expectations. I think its knowing what the expectation is because it's like I said earlier, if you know what the expectations are then you don't have any excuses. It comes from leadership. But then leadership also, they expect teachers also. You know, the students know what the expectations are but the teachers have to be implementing that same expectation, so it's almost like in the same book, same page, and same chapter. Everybody's reading, saying the same thing. So, expectation, because your leader can put an expectation out but if teachers, if the rest of the team doesn't implement then it's not going to work. So, I think it's expectation across the board. (Mrs. Maris)

I also asked each participant to share the components of their school's program that they deemed most critical to their success in addressing bullying. When talking to each participant about the components, I found that their responses most frequently centered on leadership. Each participant was brief and direct in his or her responses. Mr. Guidry offered the following thoughts:

Strong leadership. And I'm not just talking about myself, I am talking about empowering teachers and giving them voice to talk about whatever concerns they have seen. When I first got here, one of the things that teachers did address is students just being able to just do whatever and get away with whatever, and so I think it was important for us to set an understanding that—who are the adults in the building and who are the students in the building. And I think once we set the atmosphere that this is going to be a safe environment, we're not going to allow students just to do whatever they want to do, it kind of just started to flow. (Mr. Guidry)

Ms. Dickey focused specifically on Mr. Guidry's leadership when identifying the school's most critical components. She said "Building relationships. That's going to be the biggest piece." She went on to talk about Mr. Guidry's work in building trust with students, staff, and parents during his time at Gehrig.

Mrs. Maris talked about how the beginning of the year orientation in each class and Mr. Guidry's clear expectations are critical components in Gehrig's success:

I think just that class one-on-one information given is critical. In that setting the students have an opportunity to ask questions if they don't understand. It's at the beginning of the school year. So we're not waiting until we have a problem. This information was given to you at the beginning, the first ten days of the school year. So you understand what the expectations are, you understand what bullying looks like. (Mrs. Maris)

Mrs. Ford spoke about Mr. Guidry's emphasis on ensuring that students are monitored and that adult supervision is a priority. In addition, she stated that the trainings staff has engaged in have helped teachers develop an understanding about bullying; allowing them to know how to deal with bullying and what practices will work in their classrooms.

School visits. As a high school, the environment at Gehrig is expectedly more flexible, allowing for a greater amount of independence for students than was seen at either Mattingly Elementary or Ruth Middle. In addition, Gehrig uses no particular program in their approach to bullying prevention. As such there was little visual representation or cues as to the school's approach. As a result, visits to Gehrig focused exclusively on interactions among students and their peers and interactions between students and the school's faculty and staff.

During the first of two formal observations, I visited the school during the lunch service and observed the routine as well as various levels of interaction as noted in the observation guide (Appendix C). Gehrig is unique in that it is a small academy serving less than 150 students and operates out of a building located on the campus of another large comprehensive high school. Gehrig shares the cafeteria, which is located in a different building, with the traditional high school. All students from Gehrig share the same lunch period and move as a group to the cafeteria. As students walked, they talked with one another or listened to music from their phone or another similar device. Once in the cafeteria, students moved through the service line and took their seats. They had the option to sit in the dining hall or outside. In addition, they could sit with whomever they pleased. Students socialized well with one another in this setting. They were respectful of one another and seemed very inclusive of others in their groups. Teachers and staff members did various things in this setting. Several teachers met the students in the hallway and walked with them to the cafeteria. I noted that they asked students how they were doing and often asked personal questions such as “How is your family?” or “I didn’t see you at school yesterday, is everything good?” Other staff members and teachers were waiting for students in the cafeteria. They greeted students but primarily circulated in a supervisory manner. Interactions between staff and students were frequent and continued into the cafeteria. Interactions continued to be used as a relationship building tool for the adults. Consistent with what was shared during the interview portion of the research, there was constant supervision on the part of the adults and multiple opportunities were taken to strengthen relationship between teachers and students.

The second formal observation for Gehrig took place in the front office. This was an important setting in that the primary component to the school's approach to bullying prevention and establishing culture was centered on building strong and appropriate relationships. I wanted to see how students and staff interacted with one another in a setting that required one on one interaction. Throughout the time, students, parents, and staff members moved through the office for various reasons. Students were primarily checking in for school during this time of day. Mr. Guidry's office was directly behind the receptionist so he frequently interacted with students as they came through. The small conference area off of the main office was being set up for a floating teacher luncheon as well. Because of this, teachers frequently came through the office to see what was going on. I noted that as teachers talked with one another; they often discussed their students using constructive and positive comments. As Mr. Guidry saw students, he asked them personal questions and encouraged them to have a good day. Again in this setting, the overarching theme was that of relationship building. Through all of my observations at Gehrig, both formal and informal, I noted that staff members made concerted efforts to interact positively with students. As a result, students were always monitored and rarely shied away from adults as might be the case in other middle or high school settings.

Summary

This chapter told the stories of three schools, their principals, and how each approaches bullying. The principal and selected leaders at each school site told the stories of their school in large part in their own words. Each story examined the

backgrounds and viewpoints of those on the front lines of shaping culture at the school level. The participants talked about the impact the principal plays in positively shaping the culture surrounding bullying in the school as well as specific components in each program that have proven successful. Chapter V will examine common themes from each school and explore implications for future practice.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

The primary focus of this study was to examine the positive influence the principal can have on the culture of bullying in his or her school. In Chapter IV, I told the stories of three exemplar schools in the area of bullying-prevention. Each of these schools had a positive culture surrounding bullying. In Chapter II, culture is defined by Peterson and Deal (1998) as “the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges” (p. 28). To tell the stories of the three schools, I used many of the words of the principals and the staff leaders at each of the three case study schools. I developed the data around common themes that emerged from the coding and analysis process. It is important to keep in mind, however, that while the information presented in Chapter IV is presented as data, it is much more than that. The data contained in this study are the personal stories of those on the front lines of bullying prevention. It represents the thoughts and feelings of real people in their struggle to work with young people as they deal with the ever-increasing issue of bullying in a time in which there is more attention to it than ever before. Each participant shared his or her passion on the issue. They shared personal stories, in some cases difficult for them to tell. As the

analysis will show, these stories shape their thinking and their approaches and ultimately help them present how they lead and shape culture in the school.

This chapter is designed to provide some context for the data presented in Chapter IV of this study. It serves as a means of consolidating the findings and presenting the data in a manner that is both concise and transferable. After considering the importance and informational value of this research, the data presented in Chapter IV are examined categorically as it relates to the four research questions for this study. The similarities and differences among the principals and their schools are also examined along with an exploration of common and unique approaches, practices, and leadership characteristics. This chapter concludes with implications and recommendations for leaders based in the common best practice of the three exemplar schools.

Why This Research is Important

As a school principal, I have at times found it difficult to find opportunities to share the stories of success outside of my school. There are various reasons for this, but it is sufficient to say that I believe that many principals similarly struggle. This is particularly true as it relates difficult topics such as bullying. This research is important because it provides an opportunity for schools and their principals to speak about the issue of bullying. As mentioned earlier in this work, much talk is made about bullying and in particular bullying in schools. What is often missing in this conversation is the voice and perspective of the leaders on the front lines. Principals have had to stand by and watch as the issue of bullying is defined for them. More significant is the continual focus on negative outcomes. This is particularly troubling because there has been a void

of the stories of strong schools and leaders that are able to shape culture around bullying in their schools. This research gives voice to those principals and tells the stories of their schools where much can be learned and modeled.

This research is also important because of the timely nature of the topic. As shared in the introduction to this work, there has been an upsurge in stories of bullying over the last several years. Interest in the topic seems to be at an all-time high. Major news outlets often lead with stories of bullying. Even the NFL has recently had to confront the topic. All of this attention has led to a national conversation about bullying. Folks are searching for answers and seeking out leaders who can inspire and cultivate culture. As a result, there is a sensitivity to and awareness of bullying unlike in bygone days when many considered it a rite of passage. The growing national interest in bullying provides an opportunity to look at bullying from a fresh perspective while turning attention to the types of leadership presented in this study.

Over the last several years, there has been a shift in the expectations of both the school and the student. The introduction of ever evolving technology coupled with constant exposure to communication and information resources has allowed students to be connected like never before. It has also changed the expectation of how learning is structured in schools. The changing nature of schools and students require school leaders to have a broad understanding of current issues and challenges such as bullying. As discussed in Chapter II, cyberbullying is one of these emerging issues. This research encourages principals and school leaders to explore their own ability to impact the culture in their school as it relates to bullying. I believe that leadership is the primary variable in

establishing culture. As such understanding the issues as well as understanding the impact one can have can empower and equip a leader to make a difference.

Another key reason for this research is the aggregate climate of accountability surrounding schools and in particular bullying. As discussed in Chapter II, schools and principals are being increasingly held accountable for their responses to incidents of bullying. Many states have recently enacted laws and school districts have written or revised policy that raises the stakes for schools. Principals must be equipped with the appropriate knowledge of the issue along with an understanding of their responsibilities. This research can assist them as they develop that knowledge and understanding and can encourage them as they endeavor to lead and impact the culture in their own schools.

Finally, there is an importance for this research grounded in the urgency of the issue of bullying itself. In the introduction to this work, I shared stories about extreme cases of bullying and the often-tragic ending for its victims. Unfortunately, these stories are replicated over and over throughout schools in America. Many of the participants in this study shared stories of experiencing bullying in their childhood and how it affects them to this day. As such, principals not only have legal and professional responsibilities with regard to bullying, they also have a moral obligation to confront bullying and establish a positive culture in the school.

Revisiting the Research Questions

The main purpose of this study was to examine the principal's ability to positively impact the culture of bullying in a school. As such this study asked the following research questions:

1. How do a principal's attitudes and experiences affect how he or she perceives bullying?
2. How do principals of schools that have positive anti-bullying cultures perceive their role with regard to the culture of bullying at the school site?
3. How do effective principals lead on the issue of bullying?
4. What components do effective principals deem necessary to build a comprehensive approach to bullying?

In the previous chapter, I examined each of the three schools independently. I told a story about the school, the principal, and the staff leaders at the school. It was important to include the stories of the school staff leaders along with the principal. This was done principally because these staff members represent the leadership of the school. Many times they are an extension of the principal, particularly as it relates to bullying prevention. They have unique backgrounds and insights that serve as a reflection of the principal and his or her leadership. The inclusion of their stories provides insight as to how the principal leads as well as into the types of people they choose to help them lead. All the stories reflected the data that emerged from the research questions. Here the data are examined conceptually in relation to the four research questions. It is consolidated and presented conceptually by commonality and difference. This presentation is designed to provide context and allow for transfer of information.

Research Question #1

As evidenced in the conceptual framework of this study, I believe that there is a relationship between a principal's attitudes and experiences about bullying and the way

he or she perceives bullying. The first research question, “How a principal’s attitudes and experiences affect how he or she perceives bullying?” was designed to develop an understanding of how each principal and school leader defined bullying and expressed their opinions about bullying, as well as to explore their experiences related to bullying. There were several similarities among the principals and their backgrounds and attitudes towards bullying.

As I talked with each principal, I began by trying to gain a general understanding of how each thought about bullying. Even in the general conversations I had with each principal before the formal study had begun, they all expressed excitement over the study. Each shared that they felt that bullying was a serious issue that needed additional attention. As we talked during the interview portions of the study, each principal was dogmatic in their opinions about bullying, sharing a universal contempt for bullying and conveying an understanding of the changing climate surrounding bullying. In addition, their definitions of bullying were all characterized by clarity. They all saw bullying as action that was persistent and continual. They contended that bullying could be verbal or physical. There was very little variation in the opinions and definitions among the principals. This can be partially attributed to the well-defined bullying definitions and procedures at the district level as seen in the principals’ responses to district level training they all had received in the area of bullying protocol and prevention. In addition, it was not surprising that three case study schools chosen for their work in bullying prevention would be led by principals who spoke with clarity and conviction when addressing the issue of bullying. Each principal’s definition was also consistent with Olweus’s (1995).

This is important as Olweus emphasizes definitions and understanding as critical in the ability to address bullying with clarity.

Talking with each principal about his or her experiences with bullying followed this up. As might have been expected, each principal was able to share various personal and professional experiences with bullying. For some the experiences were difficult to share, having lasting effects that clearly shaped their current feelings and attitudes. It appeared to be their experiences that heightened their awareness of bullying and caused them to value their position as a leader. They saw their position as an opportunity to make a difference. Mr. Guidry offered a clear example of this when he passionately stated that he knew that if he ever were in a position of authority, he would never let bullying happen. His definition and experiences with bullying were personal, reflecting his own experiences with being bullied as a child and directly influenced his opinion on the issue. Mrs. Rizzuto on the other hand, had very little experience with bullying as a child and when she did, she was expected to handle it herself. She noted that times are different now and bullying is more consequential for victims and bullies. Her experiences help her to see the isolation of the victim and their need for assistance and intervention. In her definition, she pointed out that a victim of bullying often sees himself or herself as helpless. As a result, her opinions reflect the need for education and understanding about bullying.

In contrast to the research, which shows that many teachers have a lack of understanding of bullying in general (Hazler et al., 2001) and that principals are often characterized by gaps in awareness and understanding of the complexities of bullying

(The Principal's Perspective, 2008), each of the three principals, as well as the teacher leaders at each school, were characterized by clarity in their definitions, understanding, and awareness of the various nuances associated with bullying.

Research Question #2

It was also important for this study to understand how principals of schools that have positive anti-bullying cultures perceive their role with regard to the culture of bullying at their school site. The question, "How do principals of schools that have positive anti-bullying cultures perceive their role with regard to the culture of bullying?" was designed to understand what their assessment was of their school, how they saw the culture, and what role they saw themselves playing in shaping that culture. It is my belief that regardless of how a principal feels about any issue, without an understanding of his or her influence or a sense of responsibility there is no commitment to act.

Each of the three case study schools saw themselves in a different place with regard to bullying. The data used to identify the schools reinforced each school's assessment. What that data also highlighted was that each school was heading in a positive direction in terms of their culture. As such, there were commonalities in the participants' assessments of their schools. Participants at each of the schools commented that there was very little bullying at their school, however they exhibited a sense of realism by indicating that there were certainly situations that go undetected and that even in the best of situations, there will be problems with bullying. Each school also has created an environment where there is a clear understanding of bullying and what

happens when it takes place. Students at each of the schools feel comfortable coming forward for themselves and many times on behalf of others.

The culture as it relates to bullying is a foundational component of this study. Many individual aspects of each school's culture were highlighted in Chapter IV of this study. There were some corporate components from all three schools that surfaced in the interviews with the participants. A primary theme was the existence of strong relationships between staff and students. There is a value and appreciation of both students and staff at each of the schools. As a result, the participants saw their schools as a safe place where the phrase, "Bullying is not tolerated" is echoed over and over again.

The participants shared much about the attitudes and perceptions of bullying that exist in their school community as well as the factors they saw as contributing to those attitudes and perceptions. Attitudes and perceptions contribute to the culture in the school and as such, it is important to understand the principal's influence in shaping those attitudes and perceptions. The first step was to understand if the principal saw him or herself as having influence. To that question, the principals as well as the other school leaders emphatically stated that they believed that they had influence over the attitudes and perceptions of bullying that existed in the school community. There was an understanding that the principal sets the tone, the vision, and the expectations. Out of that understanding grows the knowledge that the principal holds the power to influence through leadership and action.

Finally, it was important to understand what beliefs existed about the responsibility of the principal to shape culture. This differs from the examination of the

principal's ability to influence. The responsibility to shape culture diverges from the ability to shape culture and examines the principal's obligation. All of the participants were concise on this point, practically offering a list of their expectations of the principal with regard to his or her responsibilities in shaping school culture around bullying. First and foremost the principal has a responsibility to lead. All leadership begins at the top, according to the participants. The principal has a responsibility to set the vision and communicate about what is important. He or she has the responsibility to lead by example and set the tone through his or her actions. The responsibility to shape the culture requires action on the part of the principal. Simply being the principal and having an anti-bullying program is not enough.

A closer examination of each principal's thoughts on his or her responsibility to shape culture sheds more light on the ability of the administrator to positively impact the culture surrounding bullying in his or her school. Table 7 illustrates the common and unique responses among the three case study principals when asked about their responsibility to shape culture around bullying. Each of the principals were in agreement with one another and the teacher leaders on the three points of setting vision, setting expectations, and communicating. This would be expected, as all three of these responses would most likely be heard when asking about a principal's leadership in most any area. The unique responses from each principal reveal more about how they see their role and in turn lead. Mrs. Stengel highlighted the need for the principal to establish the seriousness of bullying. This is evident in the emphasis on the structured Montessori Program and peace curriculum at Mattingly. In addition, the school incorporates bullying

into guidance lessons, school-wide talks, and staff training. Mrs. Stengel reiterated on several occasions that she wanted to ensure that staff and students alike understood what bullying is and how to deal with it. Mrs. Rizzuto noted that the principal has a responsibility to lead by example. This seemed evident in her nature to meticulously plan and organize. While other staff members did not necessarily see her as leading by example, her voice was repeatedly heard throughout their comments. This uniform voice was a testament to her work and consistency as she leads the school in its anti-bullying efforts. Mr. Guidry noted that the principal has the responsibility to establish a culture of shared leadership. At first analysis, this was a noteworthy comment considering his leadership style was established in his charismatic nature. Upon further analysis, this statement was consistent with the feeling of empowerment shared by each of the participants from Gehrig High. These unique approaches on the part of each principal highlight the ability of principals to procure similar positive results while having variations in their approach.

Table 7

Perceptions of the Principal's Influence and Responsibilities: Principals' Responses

Common Responses		
Mrs. Stengel	Mrs. Rizzuto	Mr. Guidry
Setting the vision	Setting the vision	Setting the vision
Setting expectations	Setting expectations	Setting expectations
Communicating	Communicating	Communicating
Unique Responses		
Mrs. Stengel	Mrs. Rizzuto	Mr. Guidry
Establish a seriousness about bullying	Lead by example	Establish a culture of shared leadership

Research Question #3

At the heart of this study was an examination of how effective principals lead on the issue of bullying and in turn positively impact the culture around bullying. This question, “How do effective principals lead on the issue of bullying?” was designed to gain insight into the principal’s direct approach to bullying. I wanted to know exactly what effective principals do to address bullying in their school. As a result I was able to develop an understanding of not only their actions, but also their communications around bullying. I wanted to know not only about the procedures and protocols at each school but also about how each principal speaks about bullying.

Each principal’s approach begins with clear expectations. There is no ambiguity about each principal’s feelings about bullying or the expectations he or she has for students or staff. That clarity is also evident in the protocols and procedures at each school. While the protocols and procedures varied somewhat from school to school, they always began with an emphasis on reporting and taking every issue seriously. It was evident that because of each principal’s clear expectations, every staff member knew precisely what to do when they suspected a case of bullying.

Each principal also empowered the adults in his or her school building. There was a common belief that bully prevention begins in the classroom and that teachers and staff members must be empowered in order to fully address bullying. Teacher empowerment was not only limited to bullying though, it represented an approach in which each principal believes in creating teacher leaders and enabling them to efficiently and effectively teach and lead students.

Relationship was also a key word that was repeated throughout my time at each of the three schools. An emphasis on relationship was central in both Mr. Guidry and Mrs. Rizzuto's approach to bullying. Although this looked differently at each of the three schools, and was never directly mentioned in response to this research question at Mattingly, it was clear that each of the three principals believed that relationship was at the heart of successfully creating a culture of mutual respect and trust in a school. The emphasis on relationship also led to a focus on respect at each of the schools. Principals worked with their staffs and students to build a respectful environment where each person is valued and appreciated.

Talk is also an important element in each principal's approach to bullying. Staff meetings, parent events, student assemblies, PLC's, and individual conversations are all opportunities that each principal seizes to talk about bullying. These effective principals are not afraid to acknowledge the existence of bullying. Rather they confront it directly with clarity and conviction. They use language that is firm, straight forward, and often laced with stories that are relevant and at times personal. They talk about how to recognize bullying and what to do when it happens. More importantly thought they convey a tone about bullying when they talk through the use of phrases like "no tolerance" and "everyone is responsible." Through this approach, each principal uses his or her language to impact the culture surrounding bullying in each school. Table 8 provides an overview of the common actions or attitudes by each principal that were identified by the participants as contributing to a positive anti-bullying culture.

Table 8

Principal's Approach to Bullying: Common Actions or Attitudes that Contribute to Anti-Bullying Culture

Action or Attitude	Mrs. Stengel (Mattingly Elementary)	Mrs. Rizzuto (Ruth Middle)	Mr. Guidry (Gehrig High)
Open/routine communication about bullying and expectations	X	X	X
Develops targeted strategies based on data	X	X	X
Has high expectations for teachers and students	X	X	X
Emphasizes relationships		X	X
Displays a genuine care for students	X		X
Emphasizes adult reporting and intervention	X	X	X
Establishes clear protocols and procedures	X	X	X

The differences among each principal's approach were far less obvious than their similarities. This observation lends itself to the notion that there is consistency in the common attributes or approaches necessary for a principal to positively impact the culture surrounding bullying in his or her school. Though slight, there are differences, however, among the three principals studied. To identify those differences, it was necessary to look at what was missing from the data rather than what was present. For example, no participant directly mentioned relationship as an attitude or approach for Mrs. Stengel at Mattingly Elementary. Relationship did surface in relation to the other research questions at Mattingly, but was noticeably left out in response to the principal's

approach. This was true of both the teacher leaders as well as Mrs. Stengel's own responses. While it is clear based on the totality of the data that Mrs. Stengel places an emphasis on relationships, it can be concluded that there is some disconnect in how the staff perceives the principal's priorities. As will be seen in the analysis of research question four, it is plausible that the principal's primary focus on the program at Mattingly as a means of bullying prevention has left a gap in the perceptions of the principal's personal approach to anti-bullying. At Ruth Middle, the one glaring omission from the data was the lack of reference to Mrs. Rizzuto's genuine care for her students in her approach. Again, the data as a whole along with a clear sense from my time with Mrs. Rizzuto revealed that the principal is clearly driven by a genuine concern for her students. Mrs. Rizzuto does rely heavily on the establishment of clear protocols and procedures, as evidenced in the data from research question four, along with key adults empowered and expected to lead and act in the school's anti-bullying approach. This reliance on data and staff leaders possibly disconnects her emotionally from both her staff and the issue. For both Mrs. Stengel and Mrs. Rizzuto, the data would indicate that the staff at each school at times struggles to see them directly connected to the anti-bullying efforts in their school. Their leadership is clearly evident from the data and is recognized through various direct responses from participants. Mr. Guidry's emphasis on personal relationships was noted as the primary action or attitude in his approach to anti-bullying. Throughout the data, this appears to be the result of the personal charisma that defined his leadership style. As a result, the participants at Gehrig High seemed to have a great deal of insight into his leadership and approach as compared to Mattingly or Ruth. One might

contend, however, that an emphasis on relationships with less emphasis on structure from programs or protocols might leave the school open to regression in their efforts in the absence or replacement of Mr. Guidry in the future. A longitudinal study would be necessary to validate that notion. More attention to personal charisma for Mrs. Stengel and Mrs. Rizzuto, even if only slight, might better connect the perceptions of their attitudes and actions with the reality that exists at each school. At the same time, a stronger emphasis on protocols or programs may strengthen Gehrig's long-term approach to anti-bullying.

Research Question #4

The final research question for this study served as an opportunity to delve into specific program components at each of the case study schools. Research Question # 4 asks, "What components do effective principals deem necessary to build a comprehensive approach to bullying?" The intent is that the information gleaned from this portion of the research can be transferrable from school to school. These schools have experienced success in the area of bully prevention primarily as a result of the leadership provided by the principal. These components, or strategies, serve as an extension of each principal's leadership. They can serve as solid foundational components, however, as other school leaders seek opportunity for leadership and schools begin the process of building their programs. This notion is consistent with the literature on this topic. As noted in the literature review, Blosnich and Bossarte's (2001) study of the link between school safety measures and reports of bullying found that adults were the single greatest deterrent to bullying behavior. Olweus (2001) does point out, however, that an intervention program

is important and can significantly reduce bullying. He goes on to note that it requires a change in attitudes, knowledge, behavior, and routines in the school. What Olweus gives less attention to is the impact of the principal's leadership in changing the culture surrounding bullying in the school. Olweus and Limber (2010) points out that Olweus's work is grounded in the need for positive involvement by adults, clear boundaries for students, consistent consequences, and positive adult role models. I contend that this work shows that each of the components of Olweus's work can be furthered and enhanced by the type of leader described in each of the three case study principals contained in this work.

As it pertained to professional development, each principal and school leader was limited primarily to district organized policy and procedure training. In some instances, participants in the study had some extended training, but these training seemed to have been pursued because of the participant's preexisting interest in bullying. What was clear was that each principal and school leader had the necessary training to understand what bullying is and what the school district expected from its schools in dealing with it. The same held true at the school level. Each principal provided basic training to his or her staff on how to recognize bullying, existing policies and procedures, and expectations for staff. While some of the limitations in training may be attributed to multiple programs and initiatives that require professional development time, it was clear that none of the principals saw an urgent need for additional training for themselves or their staffs.

I also wanted to know what each participant defined as their school's keys to success with bullying. There were several common responses from each school. One of

the most common refrains referenced building relationships with students. Participants echoed this throughout the interview process. They found ways to weave the importance of relationship into several of the questions. The importance of relationship was also evident as I walked through each school and observed as staff interacted with students.

In addition to relationship, a proactive approach along with clear expectations was commonly mentioned. Participants at each school shared that their school was proactive. Each school anticipated that bullying would occur and spent their time talking about how they address it and how they articulate their expectations rather than whether or not it existed. This was evident as they talked about the procedures and protocols at their school. They were able to quickly and concisely articulate their principal's expectations and procedures for addressing bullying. Participants also talked a great deal about how each principal focuses on bullying early in the year as part of that proactive approach.

Strong leadership, student empowerment, and clear procedures were also mentioned frequently as keys to success at each school. In addition to the common themes from the three schools, Mattingly Elementary provided some unique perspective on their success. While Mattingly shared many the same keys to success as the other two schools, much of their success was credited to atmosphere created by the Montessori program through the principal's leadership. The participants from Mattingly frequently referred to the peace curriculum and community emphasis that are fundamental components in the Montessori program as crucial to their success. Even though other schools cannot replicate the Montessori program, every school can glean from the focus on peace and community building that exists at Mattingly. Table 9 provides a visual

representation of the common responses among participants for each school's keys to success.

Table 9

Keys to Success: Common Responses

Keys to Success	Mattingly Elementary	Ruth Middle	Gehrig High
Establishing expectations and procedures	X	X	X
Building trust and relationships	X	X	X
Using programs that are unique for each school	X	X	X
Utilizing a student-focused approach	X	X	X
Emphasizing adult accountability	X	X	X

Though the schools shared many common keys to success, they were not without some differences. In truth, the differences among the school are better represented as individual strengths. At Mattingly Elementary, where Mrs. Stengel uses the Montessori Program to facilitate her anti-bullying approach, the total community atmosphere, including community events and strategies targeting parent partnerships, was highlighted as a unique key to their success. At Ruth, Mrs. Rizzuto relies heavily on data to track issues and develop strategies for issues related to bullying. At Gehrig High, participants

noted that their primary key to success was the strong leadership provided by Mr. Guidry.

Table 10 illustrates the unique responses for each school's keys to success.

Table 10

Keys to Success: Unique Responses

School	Response
Mattingly Elementary	Building community/family atmosphere/parent partnerships
Ruth Middle	Using data to follow students and develop strategies
Gehrig High	Strong Leadership

Each school was also asked to identify the most critical components in their anti-bullying program. In this area, I was able to identify many common practices among the schools while seeing how each school maintained their unique approach. For example, all three schools has some program component, some form of beginning of year orientation for students, structured communication, emphasis on teacher empowerment, and for Mattingly and Ruth, an emphasis on consistently using a uniform reporting procedure. Within their similarities, however, there were significant differences. In terms of a program, Mattingly Elementary relied heavily on the Montessori Program and the Talk, Tell, Take program in their approach to bullying. Gehrig High, on the other hand, highlighted their character development program, but had no specific anti-bullying program, relying instead on the principal's personality driven leadership on the issue. Ruth Middle was different still, offering a combination between a strong PBIS program,

although not as comprehensive a program as the Montessori program, and focused principal leadership in the area of bullying.

There were some unique components, however, that were not shared among the schools. For example, the participants at Ruth underscored the importance of a robust counseling and mediation program. At Gehrig, participants consistently highlighted the need for strong leadership and the articulation of vision and expectations as the most critical components in their approach to bullying. Mattingly routinely noted the structured teaching of student responsibility and empowerment, community building activities, and strategies to build teacher support of one another as unique but critical components in their program. Table 11 demonstrates both the common and unique practices that the participants from each school identified as critical to their school's anti-bullying program. While there are many similarities among the schools found in the data, it is the differences, or uniqueness, of each school that provides the most insight. The data suggest that there is no single path to success. Success can be found on many different paths. The components these schools choose, while important and worthy to be replicated, are not necessarily the foundation to their success. As the data throughout the study reveals, the components as well as the fidelity with which they are carried out, is a direct result of the principal's leadership.

Table 11

Critical Components: Practices by School

Common Practices		
Mattingly Elementary	Ruth Middle	Gehrig High
Program (Montessori/Peace curriculum/Talk-Tell-Take)	Program (PBIS/Peer Mediation/Pathways)	Program (Character Development)
Beginning of year orientation for students	Beginning of year orientation for students	Beginning of year orientation for students
Structured communication	Structured communication	Structured communication
Teachers empowered to address bullying concerns	Teachers empowered to address bullying concerns	Teachers empowered to address bullying concerns
Consistent/uniform use of bully reporting form	Consistent/uniform use of bully reporting form	
Unique Practices		
Mattingly Elementary	Ruth Middle	Gehrig High
Students explicitly taught to take responsibility for actions	Major focus on procedures and protocols	Strong leadership
Focus on community building	Inclusion of counseling programs as a primary resource (Pathways/guidance/peer mediation)	Setting clear expectations
Bullying topics taught through classroom guidance lessons	Education about bullying (staff/students/parents)	Emphasis on monitoring
Emphasis on student empowerment	Structured opportunities to teach about tolerance and cultural differences	Focus on relationships
Strong teacher support of one another		Setting appropriate tone and atmosphere

Implications and Recommendations

To this point, this study has been dedicated to developing an understanding of how a principal can positively impact the culture of bullying in a school. Mr. Guidry, Mrs. Rizzuto, and Mrs. Stengel have been extraordinary case study principals who lead schools that are developing positive anti-bullying cultures. It is not enough however to understand and conceptualize the four research questions for this study. It is not enough to study and appreciate the three case study schools and their principals. This work is a call to action. My desire is that this work, through the study of these outstanding principals, inspires principals and school leaders to take action and earnestly strive to create positive anti-bully cultures in schools wherever they go. In order to make this call a reality, the following five simple recommendations have been developed based on the practice of the three exemplary principals in this study.

Be Courageous

Strong leadership requires courage. As an administrator, it is easy to get caught up in the daily routine of doing school. We serve in an environment of high stakes testing and accountability. As such, the focus for a principal can narrow, causing him or her to leave out many of the critical developmental aspects of teaching young men and women. It takes a determination to spend the time, energy, and capital necessary to build a comprehensive approach to an issue as charged as bullying. As we have seen from the research, many school leaders fail to even acknowledge bullying as an issue in their school. Conversely when looking at the leadership of the three principals in this study

each one has the courage to acknowledge that bullying exists in their school and is willing lead the effort in their school to create a positive culture.

Use Your Experiences to Provide Clarity

As with most emotionally charged issues, leaders who take a stand most likely have some personal experience with the issue. Each of the principals in this study had some degree of experience with bullying. While that in and of itself was not necessarily surprising, what I did find interesting is that each principal was not only open about their experiences, but also used their experiences, both personal and professional, to provide clarity for their position on bullying. Each principal and school leader talks openly about his or her experiences with bullying with both staff and students. Their openness creates realism about their approach that connects them with staff and students and presents them as genuine and caring. Using their experiences to provide clarity is one of the keys to each principal's approach to bullying in his or her school.

Communicate Clearly

While the notion of clear communication for a principal seems a bit obvious, it is nonetheless critical to each of the three case study principal's approach. Each principal sees himself or herself as responsible for setting the tone at each respective school. Each spends time talking and creating a vision. They spend time ensuring that each staff member and student understands policies and protocols related to bullying. They clearly articulate their feelings and expectations about bullying in their school. Mr. Guidry routinely calls students together as soon as he suspects that there may be a disturbance to the school's equilibrium. He tells students what he sees as the problem, he reminds them

of his expectations for them, and he challenges them to live up to their shared school vision. He makes a point of avoiding ambiguity with all of his stakeholders. He, like Mrs. Rizzuto and Mrs. Stengel, has learned the value of communicating clearly as a method of dynamic leadership.

Training Can Be Minimal, But Must Be Meaningful

Professional development is a critical component in the field of education. Educators are routinely trained in policies and procedures, new initiatives, as well as a variety of social or academic topics. It is such a key piece with so many topics that administrators often struggle to find time to adequately address each necessary topic. As such, many schools find it difficult to deal with topics such as bullying with significant depth. I thought this would certainly be different at the three schools in this study. I expected to find that professional development on bully prevention would be a significant component to the training offerings at each of the schools. What I found was the opposite. There was no more time given to training on bully-prevention than in any other typical school with which I am familiar. What was evident was that when bullying and related information was presented to the staff, each principal used it as an opportunity to communicate his or her passion and vision for the culture in the school as it related to bullying. In short, although the training at each school was minimal, it was meaningful.

It's about the Relationships

Over and over throughout this study, the word relationship has been repeated. Each principal talked about relationships with their staff, their relationship with their students, and their staffs' relationships with the students. Mrs. Stengel talked about

relationships with parents and the community. Relationship breeds trust. When there is trust, the staff will follow the principal. When there is trust the students will feel comfortable approaching the adults. They will even feel comfortable approaching adults on behalf of other students. When there is relationship and trust there is support and backing from parents and community members. The substantiation of relationship was particularly evident at Gehrig High. Mr. Guidry has built his entire leadership approach on a foundation of relationship building. This surfaced with every participant in almost every question I asked. It was evident in every observation at Gehrig as well as Mattingly and Ruth. An understanding of relationship and its importance might very well be the most basic element in an administrator's ability to positively impact the culture of bullying in his or her school.

Future Research

Bullying in schools is a current and contentious issue in news media today. It generates a bevy of emotions both inside and outside the schoolhouse. Considering the current climate, there is no reason to suspect that the attention to school bullying or the urgency with which we should approach it will wane in the foreseeable future. As such, it behooves us as educators to not only learn as much as we can about this serious issue, but to delve deep inside programs that work, determine what is transferable, and learn how to lead on this issue.

There is a great deal of current research on bullying in schools. What is often lacking, however, are the voices from the schoolhouse itself. While there is still much to be learned about bullying in schools in general, the individual administrator's relationship

to bullying was the focus of this study. This study was designed to narrowly examine exemplar schools and how their principals impacted the culture of bullying in the school. I would like to see additional research that further explores principal's relationship to school bullying. For example, this study did not examine specific factors that negatively impact the culture of bullying. It would be beneficial to examine those factors along with what specific approaches or strategies effective principals employ to target those factors. It would also be beneficial to examine the antithesis to this study, the role an administrator can play in negatively impacting the culture of bullying in a school.

This work also superficially looked at the role staff leaders play in the principal's approach to bullying in the school. I primarily used the perspective of each site leader to see the principal and gain a clear understanding of his or her leadership. A further examination of these support leaders would be beneficial for schools attempting to create a comprehensive approach to school bullying that is grounded in teacher empowerment and distributive leadership.

Final Thoughts

When I began this study, I had many preconceived notions about how this journey would unfold and what I might find as a result of the time spent conducting the study. In actuality I never fully understood what this journey would entail or what I would learn. Certainly some of what I found was as expected. Strong administrators who are determined to lead in the area of bullying will see success. Programs designed to target bullying and student conflict, when implemented with fidelity, will effectively impact the culture of bullying. This was indeed borne out in this study. At Gehrig High School, Mr.

Guidry is a strong and dynamic leader who relies almost exclusively on his persona to lead and uses no program in his approach to bullying. Mattingly Elementary is a Montessori school where the program is a critical component. Mrs. Stengel is visible and passionate, but devotes a great deal of her time to strengthening the Montessori program at the school. Mrs. Rizzuto is a dominant leader but is far less visible than Mr. Guidry or Mrs. Stengel. Ruth Middle relies on a program, PBIS, and strong staff leaders to drive their success. The real lesson for me however was more personal. This lesson came as I examined my role as a principal in my own school.

My greatest desire is to see any success that might be achieved during my time as a principal live far beyond my tenure. As I examined each principal's relationship to the culture of bullying in his or her school, I found myself asking, what will happen when this effective principal is gone? Will this success be sustainable? In creating a positive culture around bullying, is each principal building a sustainable program? These questions are difficult to answer in the present, but they create a frame with which to measure the work. In saying that, as I spent time in each of the three case study schools, I repeatedly found myself inspired and encouraged. There is much to be learned from these three leaders. This study merely scratches the surface of their leadership and expertise.

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APPENDIX A

DISSERTATION INTERVIEW GUIDE—FOR ADMINISTRATOR

Interview will begin with basic rapport building considerations and questions. We will go to interview in a location of their choice, I will ask general questions about their recent weekend or family happenings, and extend thanks and gratitude at the beginning for their time and willingness to answer the questions. These questions will not be recorded.

Context to note in writing: gender, general age, race, comfort level of participant, type of school that they are serving as principal.

Demographic questions will include: years of experience in current role, total years' experience in education, other experiences in educational leadership, any other related experience. These questions will be recorded.

Research Question 1

1. How would you define bullying?
2. What have been your professional experiences with bullying?
3. Have you had any personal experiences with bullying, such as when you were a child or student? If so, please explain.
4. What is your general opinion of bullying?

Research Question 2

5. What is your assessment of bullying in your school?
6. What attitudes or perceptions about bullying exist in your school?
 - a. What factors do you suspect shape those attitudes or perceptions?
 - b. Do you believe that you have some influence over those attitudes or perceptions? Please explain.
 - c. What responsibility do you believe that you have in shaping those attitudes or perceptions?

7. How would you describe the culture as it relates to bullying in your school?

Research Question 3

8. How do you approach the issue of bullying in your school?

9. When do you talk about bullying with staff or students? What do you say?

10. What are your protocols and procedures for addressing bullying in your school?

11. What successes have you experienced related to bullying?

12. What are your challenges related to bullying?

a. What challenges do you see as real?

b. What challenges are created for you by outside forces (district leaders, media, etc.)?

Research Question 4

13. What do you believe have been keys to your school's success in addressing bullying?

14. What professional development have you received to help you address bullying in your school?

15. What professional development has your staff received to help them address bullying?

16. What components in your/your school's approach have been most critical/successful in shaping the culture of bullying at your school?

17. Is there anything else that you feel is important to understand your role as it relates to bullying in your school?

APPENDIX B

DISSERTATION INTERVIEW GUIDE—FOR LEAD SUPPORT STAFF/TEACHER LEADER

Interview will begin with basic rapport building considerations and questions. We will go to interview in a location of their choice, I will ask general questions about their recent weekend or family happenings, and extend thanks and gratitude at the beginning for their time and willingness to answer the questions. These questions will not be recorded.

Context to note in writing: gender, general age, race, comfort level of participant, type of school that they are serving.

Demographic questions will include: years of experience in current role, total years' experience in education, any experiences in educational leadership, any other related experience. These questions will be recorded.

Research Question 1

1. How would you define bullying?
2. What have been your professional experiences with bullying?
3. Have you had any personal experiences with bullying- such as when you were a child or student? If so, please explain.
4. What is your general opinion of bullying?

Research Question 2

5. What is your assessment of bullying in your school?
6. What attitudes or perceptions about bullying exist in your school?
 - a. What factors do you suspect shape those attitudes or perceptions?
 - b. Do you believe that your principal has some influence over those attitudes or perceptions? Please explain.
 - c. What responsibility do you believe that your principal has in shaping those attitudes or perceptions?

7. How would you describe the culture as it relates to bullying in your school?

Research Question 3

8. How does your principal approach the issue of bullying in your school?
9. When does your principal talk about bullying with staff or students? What does he/she say?
10. What are the protocols and procedures for addressing bullying in your school?
11. What successes have you seen at your school related to bullying?
12. What are the challenges related to bullying at your school?
 - a. What challenges do you see as real?
 - b. What challenges are created by outside forces (district leaders, media, etc.)?

Research Question 4

13. What do you believe have been keys to your school's success in addressing bullying?
14. What professional development have you received to help you address bullying in your school?
15. What professional development has the school staff received to help them address bullying?
16. What components in your school's approach have been most critical/successful in shaping the culture of bullying at your school?
17. Is there anything else that you feel is important to understand your role as it relates to bullying in your school?

APPENDIX C
OBSERVATION GUIDE

School Level: _____ Date: _____ Beginning Time: _____

Setting: _____ Ending Time: _____

Guiding Questions	Comments
What are students doing?	
What is school staff doing?	
How are students interacting with one another?	
How is school staff interacting with one another?	
How is school staff interacting with students?	
How are students interacting with school staff?	
What protocols/procedures related to bullying are evident?	

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY
2718 Beverly Cooper Moore and Irene Mitchell Moore
Humanities and Research Administration Bldg.
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Greensboro, NC 27402-6170
336.256.1482
Web site: integrity.uncg.edu
Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #216

To: Trent Vernon
Ed Ldrship and Cultural Found
3982 Huttons Lake Ct High Point NC 27265

From: UNCG IRB

Authorized signature on behalf of IRB

Approval Date: 7/09/2013
Expiration Date of Approval: 7/08/2014

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)
Submission Type: Initial
Expedited Category: 7.Surveys/interviews/focus groups,6.Voice/image research recordings
Study #: 13-0202
Study Title: The School Administrator's Impact on the Culture of Bullying in the School.

This submission has been approved by the IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal.

Study Description:

This study is designed to explore the positive impact a school administrator can have on the culture of bullying at his/her school. It will examine how the attitudes and perceptions of the administrator affect their language and actions towards bullying and in turn the culture of the school. This will be a case study of three exemplar schools and their principals.

Investigator's Responsibilities

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

Signed letters, along with stamped copies of consent forms and other recruitment materials will be scanned to you in a separate email. These consent forms must be used unless the IRB has given you approval to waive this requirement.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented (use the modification application available at <http://integrity.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>). Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB using the "Unanticipated Problem-Adverse Event Form" at the same website. Please be aware that valid human subjects training for all members of research team need to be kept on file with the lead investigator. Please note that you will also need to remain in compliance with the university "Access To and Retention of Research Data" Policy which can be found at http://policy.uncg.edu/research_data/.

CC:
Ulrich Reitzug, Ed Ldrship and Cultural Found

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: LONG FORM

Project Title: The Administrator's Ability to Impact the Culture of Bullying in a School

Project Director: Trent Vernon / Rick Reitzug (Faculty Advisor)

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

This is a research project intended to explore the ability of the administrator to positively impact the culture of bullying in a school. My research will focus on the attitudes, perceptions, and actions of the principal in addressing bullying in the school. Your participation is voluntary.

Why are you asking me?

During my research, I am seeking to gain perspective from principals and school leaders who serve at model schools in addressing issues related to bullying. Three schools (elementary, middle, and high) will be selected. As a principal or leader in the area of bullying identified by your principal within your school, I wish to seek your perspective regarding your successful approach to combating bullying.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

Each principal or school leader will be asked to participate in an individual interview that is scheduled for 60 minutes in length. The interview will be audio recorded, transcribed, and provided for each participant to review. Opportunities for sharing additional insight will be provided after reviewing the transcript.

Is there any audio/video recording?

Each interview will be audio recorded and reviewed for transcription purposes by the researcher. No other participants, community members, or district employees will have access to the audio file. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say during the interview cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will limit access to the file as described below.

What are the dangers to me?

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. Participants may however feel uncomfortable sharing their own bullying experiences and as such I ask that participants refrain from using any names in describing their own experiences or any issues that have had to deal with in their jobs.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351. Questions, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Trent Vernon who may be contacted at vernont@gsnc.com or 336-819-2900 or Dr. Rick Reitzug at reitzug@gmail.com.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

This research project may provide educational administrators and school leaders with strategies deemed effective for addressing bullying in schools. Ultimately, students may be positively impacted as a result of the identified strategies resulting from this study.

UNCG IRB
Approved Consent Form
Valid 7/9/13 to 7/8/14

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to participants in this study. Participants will have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in designing, leading, and implementing strategies and approached to anti-bullying efforts. Sharing personal stories regarding your experiences anti-bullying is personally rewarding in itself. However, the research outcomes and conclusions will be made available to you individually for your review and consideration.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There will be no cost or compensation for participation in this study.

How will you keep my information confidential?

Information will be stored on a password protected computer, with back-up hard copies stored in a locked file cabinet participants will not be identified by name when data are disseminated, and anonymous data collection procedures will be utilized. Participants should refrain from using the names of any bullies during interviews. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Three years after the conclusion of this study, all data will be destroyed. Hardcopy data will be shredded while all electronic data will be erased using a wiping software.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Trent Vernon.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

UNCG IRB
Approved Consent Form
Valid 7/9/13 to 7/8/14

APPENDIX F

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Vernon Recruitment Script

Trent Vernon

Doctoral Candidate at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro

vernont@gcsnc.com

(336) 442-2734

The purpose of this study is to examine the ability of the administrator to positively affect the culture in the school as it relates to bullying.

As this study comprises exemplary schools in the area of bully prevention, the school district's central office has assisted in identifying your school as a possible participant in the study. The participants for this study comprise four to six staff members from each of the participating schools. Each case study will include a combination of school administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, and teacher leaders. Each participant will be based at one of the participating schools, will have a leadership role, and will be able to offer expertise on the school's approach to bullying as a result of the principal's leadership. The principal at each site will be asked to help identify the specific leaders for the study. Principals will be asked, to the greatest extent possible, to provide a diverse (experience, gender, race, etc.) sampling of participants.

The study will involve a semi-structured interview of each participant conducted by the researcher lasting one hour +/- . There will be no compensation or reimbursement for participating in this study. I will also work with the principal to identify an opportunity to conduct an observation(s) at each site of various non-structured settings.

The study will take place at each selected school with interviews taking place in the office or classroom of each participant (or another acceptable location identified by the participant).

If there are any questions about the study, please contact Trent Vernon at vernont@gcsnc.com or (336) 442-2734.

APPROVED IRB

JUL 09 2013